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NOTES: Marquis W. Childs has been a member of the staff of the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* for the last six years. He has just returned from abroad where he did a series of articles on economic and social advance in Scandinavia, and is now at work on the revision of a Florida novel . . . Gertrude Stein, whose little story of the break-up of a literary clique is one of the very few of her short stories ever to be published in a magazine in America, is critically considered one of the major present-day influences in modern literature. A native of Pennsylvania, she prefers Paris, where for many years her salons in the rue de Fleurus have been famous and often deadly. She has written several books, including the novelettes volume "Three Lives," (*Modern Library, October*) and "The Making of Americans," printed in France by Robert McAlmon. The best-selling "Anthony Adverse" of today had there a prototype in length: "The Making of Americans" was 565,000 words long—but it was not a best-seller. It is doubtful if there are one hundred copies in America. Her autobiography ("The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas," *Harcourt, Brace*) was the Literary Guild Book for September . . . Seymour D. Buck lives in Newburyport, Mass., with his wife and three children. "Rupture" is his first published short story . . . Martha Dodd, whose first printed short story appears in this issue, was formerly assistant literary editor of the *Chicago Tribune,* but is now living in Berlin with her father, William E. Dodd, Sr., American Minister to Germany. She is twenty-four years old . . . R. C. Woods, instructor in English literature at the San Francisco College for Women, makes her second appearance in STORY with "The Balladmaker" which, although here in print for the first time, recently won the Mills Crothers prize for Literature at the University of California. She is the author of "O'Bannon's Bees" (STORY, No. 15), which was her first published short story . . . Whit Burnett (together with Martha Foley) has just completed the editing of "A STORY Anthology," published by the *Vanguard Press* . . . A. Averchenko, who is presented in a translation by Alfred Fox, a resident of Brooklyn, is well-known to contemporary readers of the Russian short story . . . Alvah C. Bessie, who lives in Vermont, has had the honor of having a single short story appear in as many as four different anthologies in the same year. He is now working on a translation of a Breton novel for *Harcourt, Brace and Co.* . . . John Peale Bishop, winner of the *Scribner* $5,000 long short story contest of 1931, is a native of West Virginia, but now lives in Paris . . . T. R. Carskadon was also born in West Virginia, which is the scene of "Nigger Schoolhouse." After taking his A.B.

—Continued on Page 94

THE WOMAN ON THE SHORE

by

Marquis W. Childs

IT wasn't the right kind of place for him, maybe, my place. Maybe he should of been where he could of had more care and more company around. But he seemed to like it. I don't know how he happened to come, just drifted in looking for a place to spend the night. I was working with my shells there at the big window that looks onto the sea when he crawled out of that fine, shiny car of his and hobbled in.

You'd have noticed him anywhere even if he hadn't of been on crutches, with that face, proud and wild. His eyes looked right through you. Hard, but that isn't the word, fierce maybe. And I thought, as he was scrawling his name on the register, "John Langston," in that big, careless hand of his, my but aren't we hoity-toity! Never a word about how much the rooms cost or what they were like or anything. And that was new for me, not having tin-can tourists haggle over a dollar for sleeping four.

"I can give you a room on the first floor," I said, thinking as how it would be hard for him to get up the stairs.

"No, thanks, I'd rather have the second floor," he said and he cut off his words, sharp.

Well, mister, I thought, if you want to hitch yourself up those steps, it's all right with me. I sent Ceeley out to the car for his bags and I went on ahead to the room to see what shape it was in. I could tell he was used to having things nice, and I felt kind of ashamed of how the place looked. Oh, it was in a wretched state. The bank had had it for two years and the liquidator wouldn't put out any money on it. The plaster was falling and some of the plumbing wouldn't work and, oh heaven knows what wasn't wrong with it. Ceeley's cats running all over. But that upstairs front porch was nice. At high tide you couldn't see a thing but water, like being on a boat.

I said to him, "You've got a nice private screened porch here, Mr. Langston."

"Well, that's something," he said, looking around as if he didn't think much of the room.

From some it would have made me mad, but I seen that he was kind of smiling a little bit, as though it was a joke, finding himself there.

"You'll like it out on the porch, I'll put a cot out if you want me to," I told him.

"Don't bother," he said. "I see there's a chair. Things look pretty dead around here."

"Dead! Say, if a corpse came around here, he wouldn't be able to stand the quiet." That was in the late winter, but there wasn't a one of them cottages rented. You could hardly see the streets any more, they were so thick with grass. After the boom broke, those little Florida beach developments didn't have a prayer. Baker Beach held out longer than most of them, but that was because of old man Baker himself. He owned the whole show, except the hotel, and he had a $10,000 mortgage on that. But he never would admit he was stuck with a dead horse. He and Mrs. Baker had their house down at the end of Aspinwall Avenue—say, you ought to see Aspinwall Avenue—and I was at the hotel and we three was all that was left. "No, sir," I said, "it's so quiet you can hear the crabs sayin' their prayers. I wouldn't be here myself if it wasn't that I'd rather live by the ocean than anywhere else. If you're looking for any life, this ain't the place to come."

"Well, I'm not," he said, and he scowled and his mouth was shut tight, "I'm not looking for life."

"We've got a queer one up there," I said to Ceeley when I'd come downstairs. She'd been with me so long I didn't treat her like most women would an ordinary Negro servant. She and I was alone there so much of the time we got so we talked over every little thing that happened.

Mr. Baker came in just then to get his mail. He was smiling and rubbing his hands. I could tell he'd seen Mr. Langston's car outside and was tickled that somebody'd come to the beach. Every time a sand crab'd poke its head up Mr. Baker would be certain that times was going to revive again. "Well, have you got a guest?" he said. "I see there's a car outside."

"Yes, a man came in for the night, a cripple man."

"That's fine, that's fine." Rubbing his hands and strutting back and forth like he'd found a gold mine. "Now, the thing for you to do, Mrs. Haley, is to get that man to stay here. Either here at the hotel or in one of my cottages. It'd be a good place for a cripple."

I felt like saying that that sure was the truth. It was good for a cripple all right. He always made me so mad, talking up the beach like he'd just invented it, when it was there long before anybody ever heard of old man Baker and it'll be there a long time after he's blown away to dust.

I didn't think Mr. Langston was going to stay more than one night. When he came down and asked the price of the room, I thought he wanted to pay his bill.

"It's a dollar a night," I said.

"I'll keep that room, I'll be staying a while," he said, and then Ceeley gave him his breakfast.

Underneath all the pride, that fierce look, he had the saddest face I've ever seen on mortal man. Oh, he was melancholy, downright gloomy. And I said to Ceeley I couldn't see why. He seemed to have plenty of money, a fine car, and his luggage was costly. Of course, he'd lost a leg. In the war, I found out later. But if you've got your general health and a little piece of money, that shouldn't make you so harsh on life.

He was a stand-offish man. I could tell he wasn't anxious to be friendly. Even when he came and asked me where he could get some liquor, it was in a distant way, as though he was asking about the price of paring knives. I told him I could get him some through Jim Mathes who runs it in from the Bahamas.

"I'd like a case of Bacardi and a case of Scotch," he said, as cool as though he was ordering a dozen cucumbers.

It made me sort of mad, because if there's one thing you ought to be friendly about it's liquor. Mister, you must be figuring on staying a while, I thought.

"That'll come to $70, Mr. Langston," I said, "and that's the off-the-boat price. I just want you to know that I'm doing this as a favor to you."

"Oh, I see," he kind of grunted. He was pulling some bills out of his pocket. "Here's the seventy. And here's five for you. For doing me a favor."

Why I was so mad I could have let fly at him for a minute. I handed the five back.

"No thanks, Mr. Langston. You didn't understand me. I meant that I wasn't in the bootlegging business myself. But if anyone at my place feels the need of any, why I can usually arrange to get him a little. That's the way it is, Mr. Langston."

Jim brought the liquor over in the afternoon. I'd sent word to him by a

fisherman from the cove. He took it right up to Mr. Langston's room and that was the last we saw of Mr. Langston for two days. Ceeley saw him. She carried bottled soda up to his room and meals on a tray, but he didn't hardly touch the food.

"He just sittin' there lookin' out over the water with bottles and glasses scattered like on the table," Ceeley said.

"I believe that man's lonely," I said to her.

"He look to me like he don't want no company," was what she said.

But I said, "Ceeley, it ain't right for no man to be drinking alone. I'm going up there and take him some grapefruit juice and ask him if he ever tried Bacardi mixed with grapefruit juice. That makes a right good drink."

I knocked and he grunted something and I stood there in the doorway, holding the jar of grapefruit juice. He didn't say come in or sit down or a word. But I didn't care. I could see he had sorrow, something that was eating at him.

"D'you ever try grapefruit juice with that Bacardi?" I asked him.

"It sounds awful," he said.

"Well, it ain't," I said. "It's right good. And nobody's asked me, but I'm going to mix you up a drink of it and see if you don't like it."

"You'll make it two then, won't you, one for yourself?" he said, and I could see that he was thinking, well this old battle-axe has her nerve with her. But I didn't care.

You know, from that moment we got along fine. That first drink put me on a good footing. And I talked. I've always been a great hand to talk and I hadn't had anybody to talk to in a long time. It may have been the liquor that loosened my tongue. I told him all about the beach and about old man Baker putting all his money into it and what an old fool he was and how he didn't want anybody to have a good time or so much as touch a drop of liquor and how he was left high and dry with the whole development on his hands and how he wouldn't admit that it was a dead horse but kept pretending all the time that it was going to come alive. And I told him about my life, how I was raised in New York of such strict parents, just where Columbus Circle is, and how I ran away to Florida with Abner when I was only a girl, and how we used to come to the beach when you had to come in a boat from the mainland and when it was wild as wild could be and how we'd camp out in a tent and later how Abner would bring me over with the children and leave me alone there with them, weeks at a time, and

we'd run up and down the beach for miles, all naked and free as the sun itself. And I told him about my grandfather, who was Patrick Moriarty, the great patriot of Ireland, or so my father always told me. And I told him how I grieved for Abner and how I couldn't stand to be anywhere but at the beach where you had the sea and always the feeling that something would happen, that the world wasn't dried up yet, and always, too, the things that come in with the tide, the creatures and the shells and the seaweed and the driftwood and the boxes and the bottles with foreign writing on them. Mr. Langston hardly said a word. I guess I didn't give him a chance.

"And you say you were happy with your husband?" he asked once.

"Yes, Mr. Langston, for thirty-two years we were happy together."

"I don't believe it," he said, but he washed that down with the nearest thing to a grin that I'd seen on his face.

We were both in a grand good humor then and it wasn't entirely the liquor.

"It's God's own truth, Mr. Langston," I said. "Oh, we had our quarrels. Who doesn't have quarrels? But they never lasted very long. And we were happier than ever, afterward."

"I still don't believe it," he said. "But have another drink anyway, Mrs. Haley."

Ah, I thought, there's a woman in it, that's what's eating him. But it was a long time before I found out. He wasn't like me. He wasn't one to open up and tell you about himself. Just now and then he'd drop a word. I often said to Ceeley that it would have been so much better for the poor man if he could have opened up and told me all about his troubles. He'd forget, when he was with me, about his troubles.

Him and me'd go up the beach in my old car that I call Gramp. I'd had oversize tires put on Gramp so I could drive on the beach without being afraid of the soft sand or the tide coming up. And we'd go where the shells were thick. He liked best of all the shell that's called around here a St. John's drinking horn. "The shape of it!" he'd say, when we'd find a big one, "good Lord how beautiful." Like it was something rare and strange. Sometimes I'd come back and leave him there on the beach all alone the whole livelong day, with a little snack of lunch to keep his hunger off when it came noon.

He liked our beach. He liked to be off there by himself alone. When I'd come for him at evening, he'd be peaceful and calm. It came out, you know, when he'd been there a few weeks, that he was a poet. Yes, a poet,

and he had two or three books of his poetry with him. I couldn't make much out of it. After we got to be such good friends, he tossed the books to me where I was sitting in his room. It seemed like gloomy kind of poetry to me and I told him as much. He laughed, he said that was the best thing he'd heard about it. He said, yes, it was gloomy poetry all right. He wrote some poems those first weeks. One was called "Pelicans Flying." It was real beautiful, a short poem. I wish I'd kept a copy of that one. Mr. Langston was always taken with the way the pelicans flew.

And another poem was about me, so he said, but it never used my name, and I could never see that it had much to do with me. It went something about a woman waiting on the lonely shore and how she'd been there a long time, still and lonely, but not really lonesome with all the creatures of the earth and the air and the water around her, and about how it was hard for people to understand her any more and how he was afraid that it might turn out to be another siren's voice. Oh, I remember it well. I joked him a lot about it, calling me a siren, and I almost old enough to be his mother. He couldn't have been more than thirty-five, if he was that old, and he looked younger. He said the poem wasn't good enough for me, that nobody knew how to write that kind of a poem any more. But I told him it was all right, it suited me all right.

Whenever he used to get to brooding, I'd try to do something to take his mind off himself. I got him to watch with me, quiet we lay for half an hour, waiting, for the doe and her fawn that came into my garden, leaving their little sharp prints in the light, soft black soil. He liked to go to the garden when Ceeley and I'd go to pick snap beans or dig yams maybe. He seemed to like to watch us working there. My garden then was in what was supposed to be Baker Park, opposite what was once the town hall. Mr. Langston found in the tall weeds by the side one of those old signs that said, "Keep Off The Grass." That gave him the biggest laugh.

He had a nice sense of humor any way. I used to tell him that he must have Irish blood in him. He and I'd laugh more over old Baker and how he strutted around, making believe that things was just as perfect as they was when the boom was on and he was coining money hand over first. Mr. Baker was always going to sell Mr. Langston one of those cottages of his. And Mr. Langston would pretend to take him as serious.

"You mean that one over there?" Mr. Langston would say, standing in the door of the hotel. "That one I can just see from here?"

"Yes, yes, that's the one. Now that cottage, Mr. Langston, has got . . ." And old Baker would go on with his rigamarole, as though anybody'd still be foolish enough to believe it. And then Mr. Langston would ask how much the cottage was.

"What!" he'd say, "you're asking only two thousand dollars for that magnificent property! Why, I'd take that up in a minute, but I can't stand blue, you know, that blue roof."

He'd go over the whole row of cottages, with some foolish reason why he couldn't buy each one. I'd have to turn my head away and sometimes go out into the kitchen to keep from laughing. But Mr. Baker he never caught on. He always kept thinking that Mr. Langston was going to buy something even though there were times when Mr. Langston put it on awful heavy. Once he let on that if Mr. Baker'd keep the buzzards from roosting on the church—it was all falling into ruin, never had been used—why he'd buy the house next to the church. Said he wouldn't live next to any blamed buzzard roost. And I swan if for a whole week Mr. Baker wasn't out at daybreak with a shotgun trying to kill them buzzards off. I thought I'd die laughing to wake up and hear that gun going off. It didn't do no good. More buzzards just came and ate the corpses of the buzzards he'd killed.

I tell you Mr. Langston was a different man after he'd been at my place for a few weeks. Why, he really begun to flesh up a little bit. His face wasn't so lean and drawn. And you'd hear him laugh. Sometimes when my little grandchildren would come out for a few days, you'd hear Mr. Langston laughing with them like he was a kid himself. He took particularly to little Janey and she is a handsome child if I do say it myself, so round and brown and healthy, with those big, soft, dark eyes that are on my side of the family. Even Ceeley noticed that Mr. Langston was a different man until that woman came.

She had the taxi bring her over from Raymond in the middle of the morning. She come on the early train from Jacksonville, I guess. First thing I knew there she was standing at the desk. Mr. Langston was up in his room. Him and me'd planned to go to the rocks after moss in the afternoon.

"I believe you have a Mr. Langston staying here, haven't you?" she said in that butter-won't-melt-in-your-mouth kind of a way.

And I said, "Yes, there's a gentleman of that name here. D'you want to see him?"

I didn't like her from the first moment I laid eyes on her. Little pinched-

off thing, with her little pinched-off rump, hardly enough of her to make one decent-sized woman. I tell you, fashions or no fashions, I never did like those little pinched-off women that you couldn't tell from a boy unless you were right up close to them.

She said, "I'll want the room next to his. You see, I'm his wife."

"Oh," I said, and I didn't let on like I was surprised. "I'll tell Mr. Langston you're here."

"No, no, don't bother," she said, quick and like she didn't want that at all. "If you'll tell me, please, how to get to his room, I'll just go up."

I showed her the way and I tell you she gave the place a look around. There wasn't a thing that escaped her eye. I could see she didn't think much of the place. You snip, I thought, as she minced up the stairs.

During the whole two days that she was there I hardly laid eyes on Mr. Langston. She'd say, "Mr. Langston isn't feeling well, he'll have his breakfast in his room." Or he'd have his lunch in his room or his dinner. But I heard them. The partitions in that old place ain't so heavy. She was just poison to him.

"Why did you come here?" he'd say. "Why did you follow me here? Can't you let me be, oh can't you let me alone?"

Her voice was lower, but I heard her say once when he was raving on like that, "I suppose I'd like to have you behave as a husband should behave. You know very well that I've always been willing to live anywhere you wanted to live."

And he answered, "They send you the check every month, don't they? It's enough, isn't it? What more do you want of me? I came here to be alone, I came here to get away from you."

I couldn't hear what she said next.

On the morning of the third day she went back to Raymond with the mailman, looking, when she left, like the cat that's lapped up the cream. And poor Mr. Langston! He was like he was those first days when he came to my place, so sullen and gloomy and shut away, like his teeth were always hard shut against each other. He had me send for more liquor from Jim Mathes and he drank alone that way again. But I couldn't stand it. I'd grown as fond of him as though he'd been my own son. That's the way I felt about him, poor man.

Little by little it came out. He said—and I guess he was right—that the only thing she cared about was his money. And yet she wouldn't free him.

I'm not sure that he wanted to be freed, I'm not sure but what he wasn't still in love with her, even though he knew in his heart that the only thing she wanted was money. He had his lawyers send her an allowance, but it was never enough for her. She was always coming and asking for more. She'd find him, just as she found him at my place, some way or other. He'd be as cautious and careful, but she'd turn up somehow. There must have been another man in it all along, she must have been keeping another man. And he must have known it. But he never let on about that. On the face of it, of course, the law was with her, for she made out that he wouldn't live with her, that he was all the time deserting her. And she'd threaten sometimes to take it into the courts.

It took Mr. Langston a long while to get over her visit. He couldn't seem to forget it, even though I did all I could to take his mind off it. What helped more than anything was the coming of the turtles that spring. It seemed as though that made him take an interest in life again.

And it is a wonderful sight. Oh, so many years I've watched it and always as though it was the first time. Those great lumbering things coming in from the sea to lay their eggs. I love to see them scoop out the sand with their clumsy flippers and then set themselves over the hole and begin to drop their eggs, plop, plop, plop. And when they've finished—it takes them an hour or more—they throw the sand over the eggs and pack it down by raising themselves up on their flippers and dropping themselves again with such a thumping you can hear it a good ways off.

That year they came in droves and I got Mr. Langston interested in watching them. They're such funny things, you know, that almost anybody'd take to them. They came in flocks that spring and along with them, you can bet your bottom dollar, came the Minorcans from up St. Augustine way. There's nothing a Minorcan'd rather do than suck a turtle's egg. And it seems like they're crazy after turtle meat, too. That's the only time our beach is crowded, when the turtles come and the Minorcans go hunting them. It makes me mad, because once a turtle begins to lay, she won't stop. A man can come up and just kill her there and she's helpless.

One moonlight night I was sitting with Mr. Langston on his porch when we seen a turtle come right up and begin to dig a hole in front of us, hardly back of high tide mark. And she'd no sooner started laying than one of those confounded Minorcans came sneaking around. I stood up and

warned him out of there. That was my property, back of high tide mark, so long as I had charge of the hotel.

"You let her be," I said, and I was mad. "Don't you touch her or you'll hear from me. She's on my property."

And Mr. Langston he leaned over the rail of the porch and he said, "Yes, and that goes for me, too." He was mad as I was.

But the sandflies got bad and we had to go in and, do you know, that Minorcan killed her. Yes, he did. It was Mr. Langston found the bones the next morning, her skull and her shell, all picked clean and left there to show that he'd got away with her, I guess. Mr. Langston called to me, he had the strangest look on his face.

"You see," he said, "you're not strong enough. You can't protect your creatures. They'll come and kill them in spite of all you can do. You see how it is, you see this poor creature."

He talked to me like that sometimes, as though all the things that swam in the sea and crawled on the beach belonged to me. I never quite knew what he was getting at. He was smiling, but it was an odd kind of a smile, as though he might cry, too.

"Oh, that devil of a man!" I said. "That devilish Minorcan." And I may have said something stronger, too. "How I'd like to lay my hands on him."

"It's too late," Mr. Langston said.

I couldn't stand it to see his face so sad.

"Well," I said, to comfort him, "you write a poem about her, that's the best thing you can do."

"It's no good," he said, "it's no good writing poems."

It was a gray morning with a gray mist over the sea. You could hardly make out the shrimp boats riding in the cove.

"Oh don't take it so hard, Mr. Langston," I said. "There's many turtles in the sea."

But I didn't feel cheerful. I felt like there was a weight on my heart. It must have been that I knew what was going to come. And it wasn't two days later the first letter arrived. That was the one from his wife. He let me read it and oh, it was a mean letter. Beneath all the sweetness of it she gave him to understand that he'd better behave if he wanted to be left in peace. It was more money that she wanted. Everything seemed to cost so much. Of course, she might economize, she might run down and spend the spring and

early summer at that quaint little hotel he'd discovered. That was the way the letter went. It drove him nearly crazy. I couldn't do anything with him. He wouldn't hear of driving down the beach or going to the garden or fishing for yellow-tails off the little bridge with Ceeley. He just sat in his room and drank liquor all by himself.

I only found out later what was in the second letter. His face was like death when he'd read it. It was a letter with no name signed to it and it said that his wife was living with a cheap actor, that she was keeping that worthless man in fine style in New York. The look on his face—I was sitting there in the room when he read it—made me want to cry.

"Oh, it's bad news, isn't it?" I said.

"You might call it that," he said.

I knew he'd forgotten all about me, he'd forgotten where he was.

"Don't let that woman trouble you, Mr. Langston," I said. "She ain't worth it. Not for a minute. Forget about her. There's plenty of other women in the world, women who ain't crazy after money, women who know what it is to love a man. You'll find one."

He didn't see me, he didn't hear me.

I said, "Oh, Mr. Langston, there's no one woman in the world worth troubling over."

But I couldn't say anything more when he sat looking down at the floor without a word. And besides Ceeley was hollering downstairs that Mike Jeurdan had come in with some fresh shrimp for me and did I want to go and see what shells they'd found in the nets and would I want any mullet. They often call me to see what they've found that's odd and rare. And then late that afternoon Janey and her brother, Paul, came with their mother and on top of that Ceeley's old tortoise-shell cat had kittens and the children were wild with excitement at seeing the tiny things for the first time. They'd known for a long time that Ginger was going to have kittens. And then old Mr. Eberwein came bringing me a basket of King oranges, the sweetest oranges you ever tasted, with that rough, dark skin. Mr. Eberwein always has to stop and talk a while and I like to talk with the old man, too. Well, what with one thing and another, it was the next morning before I seen Mr. Langston again.

It was a wonderful morning. I woke up early and lay in my bed and watched the sun rise, the way it pops all at once over the edge of the sea after the light has come, red and purple and blue and yellow. There was that

soft feeling in the air that made me think of when I was a kid in the city and we'd walk over to Sixty-fifth street where they had them animals in cages in the spring. I guess it's all changed now. But then they had animals in cages in the park at Sixty-fifth street. I went for a walk like I do sometimes in the early morning and at the edge of the beach, where it's smooth and shiny as glass, those little sandpipers were running. I always have to laugh at them. It's like they were skating or dancing or something on the shiny smooth beach.

Ceeley took Mr. Langston's breakfast up to him, but she said he didn't seem to care about it. We hadn't much in the house to eat and so I sent Ceeley down to the little bridge to catch a mess of yellow-tails for dinner and I told her I'd do up the work around the kitchen. She likes to fish so well. It turned off hot, the sun pouring down, and I was hanging the dish towels out to air when I seen Mr. Langston.

I was on the downstairs porch and he'd come out the side door and around onto the beach. He had on bathing trunks and I thought that was funny because he'd never go in the water or even strip down his clothes to get the sun except when he was way off alone. He was that ashamed of his body, with all the scars from the war on it. The tide was coming in and there was an offshore wind and he was swinging along on his crutches right down to where the big breakers were. I thought, now what in the world has that man got it into his head to do? And I felt afraid all of a sudden. It seemed so strange, his hobbling down toward the breakers, something he'd never done before. I called to him. He let on like he didn't hear me, and maybe he didn't, the surf was roaring so. I called again, louder. And still he didn't hear and then I seen that he was walking right out into them big breakers and I was afraid.

I ran down the beach, calling to him, but he never turned. He kept right on walking out and I was just behind him when the first big comber took him off his feet. I seen on his face then what I'd been afraid of, that he wanted to take his own life. I struggled with him there in the water. "Oh don't," I said, "don't do it, Mr. Langston. Life is sweet, Mr. Langston."

He cried out, "Let me go, let me go, I say."

"Ah, life is sweet, Mr. Langston," I said. "Don't, Mr. Langston. Life is sweet."

"But not for me," he said.

And the next big comber came and threw us down and I lost hold of

him. And another and another came and I was struggling to get my breath in water that was over my head. I saw his crutches floating. And at last came a wave bigger than all the rest and it flung him up on the shore, way up almost on the dune. He lay still there and I bent over him and called his name and then I listened for his heart and I thought I heard he was still living. I turned him over and began to work on him. There wasn't much water in his lungs. And I worked and I worked, raising him and lowering him. But it was no use. He was dead. I think he may have taken some kind of drug before he went into the water. Ceeley found a bottle in his room.

When I seen that he was dead, I give up and I yielded to my grief for a minute. I just lay there beside him with my face in the sand, but it seemed I couldn't cry. I felt too bad for that, like my heart would break with it. He was so pitiful, lying there dead, his spare body with them thick, knotty scars on it, lying way up on the dune where I'd dragged him, almost under the shelter of the big, thick, broad leaves of the sea grapes that grow there.

But I knew that I had to go after somebody. I doubt if he'd been dead twenty minutes, but do you know those buzzards were on to it, circling up in the air, the damned things. I ran down the beach and up through the scrub to where Mr. Baker's house is, my dress all soaked and clinging to me and I didn't have much on under it since it was such a hot day. My hair was streaming down behind me, I tell you I must have looked wild.

Mr. Baker was all excited when I told him, could hardly drive his car. We went in the car up to the hotel and then walked down to where I'd left Mr. Langston's body. Mr. Baker fussed around like he could bring him to life, but there was nothing to do. There wasn't even any water in his lungs, I'd done such a good job of pumping him up and down. At last old Baker had sense enough to see it wasn't any use.

"This is bad," he said, "this is bad, Mrs. Haley."

"Yes, it's bad," I said, "and it's sad, too."

"We mustn't let on that this man committed suicide," he said. "We'll call it heart trouble or accidental drowning or anything but that."

"And why, Mr. Baker?" I asked him.

"Oh, it's bad, it's bad, it's bad, Mrs. Haley," he said. "It'll be bad for the beach."

"Bad for the beach," I repeated after him, not understanding at first what he was getting at.

"Why yes, Mrs. Haley," says he, "if it's known that a man came here

and committed suicide. Why that'd give the beach an unsavory reputation. We wouldn't want folks to think that a man came here to commit suicide."

I tell you, sad as I felt, I could have laughed them, laughed right in his face. But I didn't.

I said, "Well, he's dead, Mr. Baker, and it doesn't matter what you say now," and I went and got a cover to put over his poor body.

I kept thinking about Mr. Langston for the longest time, the shame of his taking his own life, the pity of it. I kept thinking that maybe if I'd done more for him and had stirred his interest more, he might have forgot about his leg and his scars and about that woman. She was fixed, the snip. He'd framed his will with his lawyers so that she didn't get any of his money although she did get something out of the government, some kind of war insurance or pension.

Often and often I'd think of the look on his face when I held him in my arms, how it was turned against life. My daughter said I grieved over him as if it'd been Joe, my own son, and I guess that was true. And I never could pass that place on the dune where the sea grapes grow so thick without feeling sad.

But one day I was walking on the beach with Janey and we were way up, way off from everyone, and I let her take her clothes off and the little thing ran naked into the water—it was hot summer. She's so bold in the water, I had to caution her not to go too far. And as she came running out with all that white surf and all that blue sea behind her, I thought all of a sudden of all the living things in the sea and on the earth and it was then I got over feeling so sad about Mr. Langston.

LEFT TO RIGHT

by

Gertrude Stein

ARTHUR WILLIAM came to see me while I was in the country. He proposed to me that we should have a book together. This was not really true; he had done his and I had done mine. We both had seen the others.

I accepted all that he proposed. The book was to be illustrated by drawings by people we both knew. He had made the selection. I made an addition but we accepted everything which was to have all those whom he had selected. Among them was one I did not much care to have as a principal one but it did not make any difference. All the arrangements had been made and I agreed to everything and even sent postals with him to every one, and this was not really an annoyance and it should not have been done.

When I came back from the country it was about a month later I saw everyone, I did not really like anyone they did not like anybody either. But I did not pay much attention because we were all home from the country and every one saw every one and we talked about everybody but when I saw the editor and I did see her I did not say anything about anything but America. This was because everything had already been arranged and there was an exhibition of all the drawings that were being used as illustration for the book that was to appear very soon.

One evening we were all going to a circus to see a man do some marvelous giant swinging. Arthur brought with him the announcements for our book and I did not notice anything. The next morning I looked and it said it was his book and it did not say it was my book and I did not say anything.

I wrote to him and said not at all it must be half mine or something. He said nothing. Then he wrote and said that the way he had decided was the right way and therefore it was too late to change something. Then I went to the editor and said it was necessary to change something. She said why yes of course that is what I think. Just then she was called by someone to

come to the telephone. She came back and said that he had said to her he would not let them change anything. I said all right there is nothing to do I am not allowing them to have anything. And that was the way the thing was then.

Now what was happening.

Generale Erving was a writer, that is to say he had written not writing but something. That is to say we were writing we were writers who were writing. We were both very fond of him. He was never interfering but he knew everything and he always said something. I knew what he said and I noticed everything. I never noticed that he said a thing. And so it went on. He had been for some time not liking Arthur William. That is to say he had not for some time said anything about liking me or anything.

When Arthur William heard from the editor that I was not giving anything he was furious and said he had asked everyone about everything and he would go on as he had done. I did not ask anyone anything and I wrote to him that I would not give anyone anything unless it was going to be done as I wanted it done. And so we went on.

Then I went to the editor to say I was through with everything. While I was sitting talking we saw someone coming. Arthur William was coming with someone. He came in alone. He was pale, but not trembling. I was not pale but I was trembling. He came up to me and said how do you do. I looked at his hand, and did not say anything. He stopped and began trembling. I sat and waited a little while, and said now this is all of this thing. And I left, and he remained doing something.

I heard about everybody talking. I did see some of them. All of them were interesting. I was talking about everything to everyone. And we never said anything about not repeating what everyone was saying. Everyone said the same thing about everyone and I knew what they said about this thing. I never met Arthur William, and he was talking to everyone and about this thing. And I was talking to everyone about this thing and everyone was talking to me about him and about everything but none of them had anything to say except that everyone said everything that everyone was saying about him, about me and about this thing. And so this was until very much later about a week later one evening.

Generale Erving called me one afternoon on the telephone to tell me something. I said I knew all about Frederick Harvard. Frederick Harvard is

a writer who has written and everybody knows all about this thing. Would he be writing something now. Yes he would and he just had and for Arthur William it was very interesting. He was seeing Frederick Harvard and Frederick Harvard called him Arthur but that was nothing everybody called Arthur Arthur but Arthur was calling Frederick Harvard Frederick and that was because Frederick Harvard was going to be writing something that Arthur would be coming to find interesting. I told Generale Erving I knew all about that anybody could have seen that coming.

Generale Erving told me over the telephone that he wanted to fix up everything. It was all right but it would be all right and Arthur was not at all there but he Generale Erving would see him was I willing. Yes I was willing but not so willing that I was willing to be refusing anything before I said it. I was not giving and refusing anything. I was willing. Yes. Yes said Generale I understand.

Of course you do I said but let us repeat it. Are you coming or are you going I am not doing anything. I will see you to-morrow evening. Well you do not want to forget that I am not here only to be accommodating. I do not need anything and it has to be said just like that or nothing. I understand said Generale Erving. I am seeing you tomorrow evening.

Everybody was quiet in between.

Generale Erving came and we spent a pleasant evening. We talked about everything.

He told me some things that Arthur had said that I did not know he said but he did say them. He told about how long Arthur had been saying he had been thinking that he had better do what he was doing. I said I had heard that Arthur was like that from someone who long ago had had enough of him and I said that I was through with him and this was after Generale said that Arthur was ready to say that he was ready to ask me to have him give in. Generale had had a piece of paper on which Arthur had written this thing. When Generale was leaving I gave the paper back to him.

The next day I did nothing. And then there was another week and then I had a letter from Arthur asking me to arrange everything. I did not do anything.

All this time I thought that it was all Arthur William. Perhaps it was and then perhaps I had better not have anything further to do with Generale Erving. Perhaps not. Perhaps I might think over everything. Perhaps I might

remember everything. Perhaps Generale would come again and I would see him and I would not say anything. Perhaps he was worried about everything. Perhaps Generale would come again and I would tell him I was busy and could not see him.

I went somewhere and there I saw Frederick Harvard. He did not want to see me. I had known him. I went up to him and I said to him I hope you are all well. And he was nervous and he said, yes, I am all well. And your wife I said to him I hope she is quite well again and he said yes she was quite well again.

When I had waited a little longer I said to the editor that I was not giving her anything and so Arthur did not have anything and that was all over. I did however have something and I kept everything and I can use everything. I sent a card to Generale Erving and I said I did not want to have any further acquaintance with him.

And now before I go out I always look up and down to see that none of them are coming. We were after that never friends or anything. This is all this true story and it was exciting.

RUPTURE

by

Seymour D. Buck

THERE was thirty-four of us lined up in front of the City Hall that mornin'. People goin' by give us a smile, or an encouragin' nod as much as to say, "Good luck, boys. Isn't it splendid the way you're being taken care of?" Some of 'em, the younger guys—they just turned their heads away; you could see their cheeks gettin' kinda red as they hurried by.

There was a stiff off-shore breeze blowin' bringin' in the sour tang of the salt marshes; it whipped out the flag, flyin' atop the big white pole on the green across from the Hall. Somehow, the way the stripes was all mixed up together, and the stars bobbin' around, it made me feel like that was the way we guys was; all mixed up like—blown around—I didn't notice any of the others lookin' at the flag, so mebbe it was only mostly foolishness on my part.

At the curbing, parked in just behind the Mayor's big shiny Lincoln, was the squat, orange bus we was goin' in. I noticed the words printed up near the door—"Seats 22 Passengers." The thick-set driver's mug, what ya could see of it stickin' out from around the Cremo he was munchin' on, reminded me of the expressions ya see down at the Abbatoir, when the elevator bell rings and they sling another load of cattle out over the sticky-wet cement floor and ya see the light glint for a second on the keen-edged knife. I guess this guy musta taken fellows like us before.

Most of us was just standin' around, tryin' to make talk, but not sayin' much at that. Once in a while you'd hear some smart bozo pipe up: "When do we eat?" That'd get a laugh out of everybody. Then you'd see 'em kinda lickin' their lips and startin' to speak, and end up by lookin' kinda inquisitive like at each other.

Maybe we was a representative bunch of young American citizens; maybe we was just nothin' but a gang of all-in, heart-sick, down-at-the-heel kids; I don't know which we was most of.

Anyway, we was all hooked up now with this Citizens Conservation

Corps thing. Everything was goin' to be hunka-dora now; no more filth—no more lice—scurvy—stealin' bread. That was all past now.

We was told to be there at seven o'clock. It was now nearly nine-thirty, and we hadn't shoved off yet. We was goin' in to Boston for physical exams, and then to camp, somewhere in New England. We didn't know where, nor did we care!

I couldn't help wonderin' if any of the other guys felt like I did. Take the Boss, or the Officer, or what-ya-may-call him; he was dressed in civvies, but his pushed-back shoulders, and his pulled-in belly (ours stayed in easy) —the way he strutted around, lookin' important, I got the idea he musta been a Sergeant instead of a Mr. Funny, how he'd look right through ya; I could almost see the guy sizin' us up as so many squads, or platoons, and wishin' deep down he could see us all lined up before some of his regulars for short range target practice. Funny I shoulda felt like that, but then I was so goddam' hungry, everythin' seemed so sharp and clear-like; seemed as it never had before, or has since. I'd been walkin' the streets most all night, too hungry to sleep. After hikin' in fourteen miles the afternoon before—yeah, they notified me early.

I don't know how all these other guys come to be gettin' into this Corps business, but as you looked 'em over, you could make a damned good guess.

There was one guy; had the house-to-house salesman written all over him. A lean, hungry-lookin' face; putty-colored skin; his lips was thin and colorless. His dark gloomy eyes never met yours. You could see him poundin' up and down the streets, peddlin' God knows what, to God knows who, or why! Guess this one'd had so many doors slammed in his face, and listened to so many pep talks by his salary-paid Supervisors (of course *he* was on commish) that he'd chucked the whole damned business.

I hadda laugh when I thought of how I come here, myself! I been workin' back up in the hills for an old Yankee name of Joe Humphrey. He's got a big, rock-strewn hunk of earth up there, and tryin' to make stuff grow where his own father'd laugh at him. He's been payin' me three bucks a week, and found!

Yeah—I asked him fer a fifty-cent raise—and got the old hoofin' documents!

Yeah, I got fired, for askin' a fifty-cent raise! I didn't leave him in the lurch, don't worry. I bet he's havin' a hell of a time interviewin' applicants

and tellin' 'em he can only give 'em "two-fifty per week, and no smokin' on the premises. Having a pretty poor season, you know."

Two guys standin' near me got into a argument. They was talkin' over the shoe strike, pro and con. Mostly con, I guess; like the ole Army game—the three shells—at the Carnival—remember it? Yeah, that's the one. Ha! Ha!

One of the guys was tellin' what a devil of a time they had puttin' the union over, and how they got the ten per cent raise. The other one just laughs, and grabbin' his arm, sings out:

"Yeah?" he chuckles. "Listen, brother. Govie told me this mornin' that Blue Seal's closed up tighter than a coffin, and they're movin' all the machinery'n' everything up into New Hampshire some place. To hell with the union!"

"Honest?" yells the other guy. He looks in amazement at the first guy, and when he nods, they both start noddin'—funny? Then they looks around at the bunch of guys waitin', and kinda begins to smile, like.

All in all, we was a fine bunch of light-hearted, devil-may-care young fellows off on a good time. Who else but the devil was there to care, anyway?

At ten o'clock, exactly, the Boss lines us up, and we proceeds to clamber into the bus. He brings us up short, though, and we turn to see the Mayor standin' on the steps of the City Hall.

The sun was glintin' on his thick-lensed glasses, so you couldn't see his eyes. The black ribbon hangin' down and draped up again over his ears looked like a check rein, and the old sun just dashed down onto his bald head, and over the fringe of gray hair above his ears. I almost burst out laughin' when the guy next to me mutters, "When do we eat?" just as the Mayor's strong, speech-makin' voice booms out the farewell words—"Proud of you, boys, and hope to see you back in better times."

There was some scattered handclappin' from some of the citizens standin' around, and a few hollow sounds from some of us rookies in the C. C. C.

You think I'm handin' ya an awful line? Listen, fella, the whole damned thing's too tough to talk about. Might's well laugh as cry over it, hadn't I? Ya don't see anythin' in the papers? Why the hell should ya? Ain't ya got eyes?

There was a little, frail guy jammed in the seat right next to me. Big blue eyes he had, and he looked like he musta been a clerk or one of those short-writin' guys, or somethin'. Long, thin fingers, hands as white as dough,

finger nails even and clean. He didn't belong with a gang of toughs like us, that's all. He had a funny way of belchin' every once in a while, and for a time I couldn't dope it out.

One damn fool up toward the front of the bus drags out a pack of ready-mades; the poor cuss, they hounded him and razzed him till they wasn't a butt left in the package. Then they tried to find somebody else—he won't make *that* mistake again.

They'd bundled us into the bus like so many sacks of grain, and now we was poundin' out over the Pike.

I guess from the little guy's face, next to me, he must of been a foreigner. When he spoke, his voice was almost like a girl's. He asked me if I thought he'd pass the physical exam.

What the hell could I tell him? His eyes kinda sparkled like, and he looked like he could almost read your thoughts.

"Sure, Kid," I answers, lookin' out the window past him. "You'll be all right, if you just takes it easy. Don't let 'em rattle ya."

He thanks me gracious like, and then tells me his name. Francois LeGrange. He had a younger brother, who was a cripple, and his mother was an invalid, most of the time. He'd been workin' in one of the factories, until they was all called out on strike, and he hadn't got back in again, like all the rest of 'em. Tough—all right. Now he was goin' to be O. K. if he just go in the C. C. C. Yeah, if he just got in . . . thinks I. And, funny, ya know, I even felt for a second or so there that after I'd got myself hooked up and was makin' my thirty per, I might send the Kid some dough, to help him out.

There was a great big cuss across the aisle; red-head, and he'd go in easy at two hundred pounds. He kep' listenin' to us talkin', and then he starts in chewin' so's everybody can hear:

"That's what's wrong with this country, anyway. Too goddam' many foreigners comin' in and takin' our places——."

Everybody listened a while and then there's a growl goes up, somethin' like the noise you hear out at the Park when the guys wheel wagon loads of raw meat up to the animals' cages—you know. Even then this bird keeps on mutterin' under his breath and glancin' over towards me and LeGrange.

I was about ready to call the guy, when I sees him dippin' into a half-pint of splits and I gives up. Hell, the guy was just tight, that's all, and blowin' off steam.

I looks down to see how LeGrange was takin' it, and, honest, the veins looked so funny against the dead-white of his skin, just like blue letterin' on a white signboard. He says softly, almost cheerful, "Don't notice, Mister."

I give him a grin, but I swore to God I'd keep between the Kid and that red-head until things was over, and later on when we got to camp I'd take the bruiser on for a ride, just to keep the Kid's memory green.

Jees', ya know, I felt sorry for that little guy. He looked so damned all-in; hungry, lean, frail. He didn't have no business in there with us cattle, anyway. He never complained—not once; it was his eyes that got me. They told how he felt; ya could see everything—the scorn, the hate, the fear, and the determination to see it through.

They didn't waste no time after we'd rolled through Chelsea into Boston. We rides down under the El tracks, past the wharves, and out toward the Army Base. When we pulls up into the Yard, the Boss rushes us out, and stands us all in line, while he disappears into one of the little buildings before us.

Pretty soon he comes out and starts usherin' us into the building.

Everybody was starvin', and we first thought it might be the entrance to the mess shack; we soon found out it was the place where they stripped us to our dirty feet and gave us the merry goin' over to see if we was fit subjects for the C. C. C.

Damned if somehow the Kid didn't get sandwiched right in between me and Red-head. We was movin' pretty fast at that; there was two of the Docs with their coats off, workin' like mad.

Red kept makin' wise-cracks under his breath, but the Kid never said a word. I tried to get him to change places with me, but nothin' doin'. The Kid had guts anyway, but it was a cryin' shame the way the drunken bastard kept puttin' it onto him.

The line got movin' faster, and it looked as if even the Medicos was gettin' hungry. There was two desks, with a clerk at each one, writin' down whatever the Doc hollers to 'em, as they was busy pommelin', and probin' and diggin' away. "Christ!" ya'd hear some guy shriek; another'd just laugh. The Doc'd grunt, "Hold still, there! Nobody's touched ya—yet!" Then ya'd see some fellow stagger out of line grabbin' at his belly, low, with both hands, and weave over to the settee next the wall where the clothes was piled.

The guy in front of me steps up, laughin'. It takes the Doc about sixteen seconds.

"Acute gonorrhoea. Clothes'r'ver there."

"Next! Step it up a little, boys."

With a last look back at the Kid, who stands there like a prisoner at the bar, I steps up to the firin' line.

The old Doc was already busy listenin' to my pump. I laughs deep down in my belly. When I looked down on the little dried-up old Doc, I coulda wiped him up wit' one hand. Jees', I still felt hungry, though.

"Jim, around here. Heart."

In a daze, I hears the Doc talkin' to his assistant. Then the pasty-faced clerk, with a smile of joy gets around behind me and pushes like a fullback, while the Doc leans on in front.

"Cough!"

I felt like a hunk of limburger pressed between two fat slabs of white bread—but I obliged.

"Again. Hard!"

A minute later, " 'Nuff," the Doc sings out, and shakes his head, regretful like as his eyes travel over my frame. "Tough. Your heart's not up to this kind of work. Your clothes'r over there," noddin' across the room.

I looks and all's I could see was the white card with the word "EXIT" in big black letters. I couldn't get it straight! Christ, they'd turned me down!

LeGrange? I turned around, and stares.

"Yes sir," the Kid was answerin' the Doc. "I worked four years in Canada—woods—me, yes."

His voice was shakin' like my knees, but his eyes, they was as big as searchlights and his fingers was tremblin'.

"Group A. Recommend for Corporal," the Doc mutters to the clerk, who scrawls an "OK" across the sheet, and hands it to the Kid.

I was just goin' to turn and beat it, when the Kid spots me and starts hurryin' over, all smiles.

Just then, Red-head lets out a bellow like a mad bull. We all turns and looks at him.

The Doc stands there, shakin' his head, and pointin' at Red's flabby belly.

"What ya think?" pipes up the Doc, starin' scornful at the piggy eyes gleamin' sharp and hot. "Ya can't do it. It's rupture. Yer out of luck, fella.

And if I was you," here the Doc lets his voice drop, but we still could hear it plain, "I'd cut down on the booze, old man."

I busted out laughin', then. Honest, I couldn't help it. There was Red—yappin' all the way down about LeGrange—and now the Kid was the only one of us three had got by even. Talk about foreigners—it must be the way they live, or somethin'—I don't know. Anyway, empty belly and all, he was in the C. C. C.

Some of the other guys musta remembered the way Red had yapped, for all of a sudden the whole damned bunch starts givin' him the horse-laugh—long and loud.

As I watched him, all that guy done, the big fat cheese, was jump across the room, grab his clothes, and run for the stairs.

As he went over the landing, ya could hear him yellin' at the top of his lungs about foreigners—damnin' the C. C. C.!

BROTHER AND SISTER

by

Martha Dodd

THE two of them, brother and sister, fair smooth hair swinging in the wind as they walked, were like a strange golden flowering, lonely and rich and deep. Arms unconsciously touching, bodies unremembered in their swift stride forward, they swept through the crowd about them, leaving behind them paths of emptiness and wonder like a poignant destruction. Tall and slender, with the grace of velvet and sun in their limbs, noses a little pointed, upturned, as if on a scent, mouths wide and ugly with a shared will and generosity, eyes cool and straight and green from looking on, they could not have been born except from the same double seed.

She had taken off her hat as her foot touched the last stone step of the church and her thick hair, cut long on her neck, straight and fine, turned up swiftly at the ends, like a Dutch cap, gleaming in the sun.

Tongues stumbling, minds high in ambition, wishing and working for a language between them, known only to them, implied and suggested in words as real and personal as the emotion behind them, they talked eagerly, with long slow pauses between, tongues crossed and tied together in a strange binding idiom, a language as unknown and soundless and without meaning to other people as the shining withheld expression of their faces.

"Peter, I know I am going to sneeze all the way home. I never forget to take a little incense home with me in my nose to sniff at from time to time."

"Think of me, Lucia," and he looked cautiously at the open raised face. "Imagine me so purified that I can still feel the water like a wet finger on my forehead."

They walked on with silent smiles in their minds, their eyes straight forward, their feet clicking in resolute harmony on the pavement.

"Shall we watch the lake for awhile before we go home? Nice, I think, and cooling after our hot church."

Sweeping onward, rhythm was like a single swinging and unbroken stem

between them. There were no pauses, no missteps, no lagging behind, no superficial courtesies as they made their way. People saw them coming, of the same high stature and thin, unbending, never deviating, with a curious rich shared music in their faces, and they stepped aside for them, passed in a slow single file as they walked by, turned around unwillingly and unwillingly remembered them.

"Wasn't he a nice lad, Lucia, the little one, so small and white in his robe, with his voice soaring over the tall heads?"

"Yes, the little one. He had a red button for a nose."

They reviewed the ceremony, their minds resting on the beauty of the chant, their fingers soft and wandering in the sweet lilies, their knees on the hard board as they looked slyly at each other, with an unheard snicker.

Then suddenly, their eyes on each other's eyes, they saw the lively lake spread before them, quivering and glittering with millions of small gold coins from the sun. They walked out on the pier as if a rushing wind were behind them, as if they were walking toward a doom of beauty. With one breath, in one tone, the second so exactly timed that there was but one reverberation of sound, their voices rose from their throats.

"Look, the silver minnows."

At the end of the pier was a small pool of minnows but recently left by a careless fisherman to a gasping silver death. They watched for a minute the shimmering spiral dance of death before they leaned over, scooped them up in handsful and threw them back into the water. Near the pier, at its edges and end, the lake was encased in ice, broken and cracked into moving fragments. Their minds faltering as they looked at each other eagerly, their subconscious wish, slowly rising to the surface of consciousness, for the joining, the sharing of their emotion in expression, they were silent a long time before they spoke shyly, hesitantly.

"Like undulating mesh, isn't it?"

"Yes, like a whispering coat of mail with the heart of the water beating under it."

Knowing their single cord of vision and the striving of their tongues, they laughed fearlessly.

"Peter, hold my nose. With the wind out here, it has become cold and red and unruly."

Her fingers holding his nose tightly, and his hand clapped over her face, they returned to the boulevard from the pier, laughing, choking for breath.

Suddenly serious he dropped his hand and saw the wind swirl through her straight heavy hair.

"Lucia, you haven't forgotten Kate is going to be at home for dinner today? My Kate, Lucia."

Her fingernails grew long and sharp against the palm of her lax, dropped hand. The green eyes swept his face, saw the quick compression of the wide mouth, the long lean line of his cheek, the fair ruffled hair, the vanishing look downward.

" 'My Kate' already, Peter? Is it the bed and board intention so soon? A hope to love, honor and obey?" Then, in sudden sad sympathy, she added, "I shall love to meet Kate."

They walked home side by side, silence like a heavy quiet fog obscuring them. Sharp clear profile against sharp clear profile, both of them holding the sure fresh outline of the other's face in the corner of their steady eyes, they needed no visual renewal of each other, memory being clearer than sight. And no drums beat out against their separate isolation and absorption.

As they opened the door they heard the precise voice of their mother.

"Children, Kate is here. Why were you so late coming home from church? We got home almost an hour ago."

She came toward them, cool and brilliant from their walk, and looked closely at Lucia. She frowned at the towsled hair and red end of nose. She glanced down at her dress.

"Lucia, why must you always look so untidy, like a school girl? Did you have to take your hat off? And of all times to wear a sweater and skirt. To church! And when you know we are having your brother's friend to dinner. Go and comb your hair. You won't have time to change your dress."

Lucia looked sweetly at her irritated mother and patted her head sympathetically.

She took the steps two by two and bumped squarely into Kate coming down. This is Kate, her mind mumbled, this is 'my Kate.' Smooth black wings of hair pressed close against her head and fluttered out around her neck. Her eyes were dark and warm and veiled in her face, her nose a steady lovely line down and her mouth small and full and painted. Sensuous and stupid Lucia's mind rapped.

"This is Kate, isn't it? I am Peter's sister. Do go down. I'll be there in a minute."

She patted a powder puff on her long nose with its curious flare at the

end and ran a comb through her thick loose hair. I am blonde and tall, she thought, with a wide big mouth, I have heavy swinging hair, not cut right for my brother, I have a wrong flared nose and my eyes are green, and I wear a sweater on Sunday. But I am like him, her mind said, I am like Peter.

As she ran to her father to press her cheek gently against his, she stopped and clenched against the bitter pageant, enacted before her eyes, of Peter, leaning over Kate, his arm around her waist guiding her into the dining room to the place of honor by his father. At the table, her face in a direct line opposite Peter's, she glanced at him, put her soup spoon down and said, her eyes hard and clear,

"Peter said he felt so goddam holy with that water on his forehead." She took up the spoon again as she saw the small o forming on Kate's mouth.

"I can't believe Peter said that," Kate answered, looking at her closely and pursing her lips in an affectionate possessive gesture toward Peter.

Her mother looked at her sharply, her brows drawn in a bitter line across her beauty, severity and dislike corroding her features. Lucia shifted her eyes quickly to her father who sat with his face turned down, a fine, baffled, marvelling smile on his lips. She reached over and touched him softly on the shoulder as he raised his head to meet her anguish. Lifting her face high she met her brother as if for the first time, and against the speech of their unwavering eyes, the heavy air fell down, the pain and conflict were stilled.

Peter saw her face blindly, love and pity pressing against the nerve of his throat. By his side, the warm passionate nest of dark features faded into the pale dream of a clear light face, brittle and distant, a song of green eyes running through. Peter said in a protective answer, softly, placatingly, "Lucia and I took a walk by the lake after church. That's why we were late."

Lucia stared defiantly at her mother who was eating carefully and angrily, placing her knife and fork on her plate in small precise gestures, carrying the food to her mouth with the same delicate swift fury of an ant burdened with a grain of silver sand for his hill. Lucia straightened herself in her chair and ran her first finger down the line of her nose while her mother looked on stonily. "Peter," she said, the magnets in her voice drawing up the head that was bent in silence over Kate. When he saw her eyes, he waited quietly.

"And we saw silver minnows. Kate, have you ever seen silver minnows?" Kate turned fearfully to Peter for help but he was withdrawn from her and she was left alone with this glittering question from his sister. Her dark eyes were held by the brilliant, emotionless stare of the light ones.

"I have seen minnows but they weren't silver. They were small and dark, somehow ugly and slimy." She raised her head bravely, her lower lip held steady by the pressure of her teeth in it.

Lucia, satisfied, returned to her food.

Peter saw his sister, arrogant and hurt, bitterly cruel in her suffering, with her strange eyes rapt and cold, her nose turned upward, a smile curving her lips unnaturally in withdrawal and defense. Her green sweater, paler and softer than her eyes, clung closely to her neck, leaving the small sweet bones exposed, and followed the young fresh curves of her breasts. Kate, nearer to him, had opened herself in anguish, in a plea for protection against his vivid sister, but he was powerless to stand behind her. He looked at her coldly in her black and white dress, gracious and planned, covering the full deep breasts, and seemed to see and not see her red lips and fine black stretches of hair.

When they left the table, he waited for his sister, letting Kate and his mother walk ahead. He said nothing to Lucia, but walked out into the living room with her, their shoulders squared and almost touching, of equal height, their eyes and hair and skin all of one piece.

Their father, more silent than usual, sat for awhile with them, his face formless and wondering, his eyes keen with love of this flamboyant questing couple. Later, he excused himself quietly and went up to his study.

Peter, Kate and the mother sat on the sofa, Lucia facing them, in an armchair, her legs flung out. Though she looked indifferently at the three before her, she was not the lonely one, the outsider in the presence of an intimate close-locked circle. Sitting across from each other, the visible form of their contact broken, without a long wish communicated, eyes resting calmly on other things meeting only for fleet seconds, the brother and sister made a strange, tense, still current across the room which the other two, mother and friend, feared to sense or touch or break.

The four of them talked lightly of their friends, of plays and books and the early spring. Always when Peter or Lucia answered a question or phrased a tentative thought, there seemed to be an edge to their words, one side of their speech hard and sharp, the other soft and moulded into a careless beauty. Once when the name of a girl was mentioned, Lucia shifted her legs, her eyes delicately brushing her brother's cheek as she looked at Kate, and said briefly, "I don't like anyone with pin dots for pupils in her eyes."

The smiles on their mouths were less deep than the smileless quiet of

their minds as Peter contemplated the swinging of his foot and Lucia watched her own clasped hands warily.

Peter pulled out a cigarette and offered the case to Kate and Lucia. With the cigarette drooping from her mouth, Lucia reached for a match from the stand by her side. When the flame spread into a quick blue fan in her fingers she leaned over to Peter and held it against the tip of his cigarette, their blonde heads bent low, their hands nearly touching, the small dying light a prong of fire rising up between them. As they bent a second too long with the flame against their skin, Kate jumped up restlessly, the flurry of her movement leaving a sudden darkness between the faces of the brother and sister. Their mother rose and stood beside Kate, both looking down upon the still sitting couple.

"Yes," the mother said, in a scarcely endurable nervousness, "let's go into the music room now."

Lucia and Peter followed them, sauntering loosely.

Lucia, when the first brave strains of Brahms' First Symphony broke from the revolving disc under her fingers, tall and triumphant with the played music touching the silent music behind her eyes, withdrew herself from her brother by her side and walked over to the couch where her mother and Kate were sitting wordless and resentful. A wistful wing of sympathy fled over her face leaving the first shadow of softness. She took Kate's hand as she sat down, and nodding toward Peter who had not moved, she said,

"He is nice, this boy Peter, isn't he? But no one should love that man. I know."

Her mother stared straight ahead, resisting her words, in white and frustrated anger. Kate, fascinated and distraught, pressed Lucia's hand, her eyes weakly dropping under the close attention.

"You must like Brahms too, Kate, if you are going to marry Peter."

And she saw, with these involuntary ironic words, Kate sitting alone, dark in a dark room, hot eyes helplessly probing the blanched bitter mysteries of life. But always in the open she saw herself and Peter walking shining mile on shining mile toward a glistening lake, white clouds banking up before them, their feet resting on the music of the ground. In a sudden mood of compassion and remorse she leaned over and kissed Kate on her dark hair.

Peter's eyes scanned them disinterestedly, his head wrapped in a shroud of music, his hands twitching by his side. He did not look at his sister but he saw her distantly, with the vagueness of one very near, bent over Kate, her

loose hair falling around her face, her wide silent mouth unsmiling, her mystic light eyes turned downward.

Kate left after the symphony had been played. When it was over Peter came and stood by her as she put on her coat.

"Don't bother about seeing me home, Peter. It was nice being here and meeting your sister. Thank you."

Peter and Lucia stood by the door, tall, twinned, unmoving, and watched the small figure pick its dark, careful, mincing way down the street. They closed the door to the scented sunlight and the trees waving, on gleaming silver branches, their light burden of clustered green blossoms.

They came back into the living room and found their mother sitting motionless and mute in anger, still, hard, hostile, as if she were there to shatter the communion of her children. Lucia looked at her and said tenderly, to herself, "Dad is the sweetest soul."

Her mother without a word sat on. Peter motioned toward the window, his head turned to his mother and sister.

"How do you like 'my Kate'?"

Lucia heard the quotation marks and answered gently.

"She is dark and loving, Peter. She will never know she doesn't need or want you."

They smiled between them. The mother, rising from the couch, faced them and said in soft nervous malice, "Lucia is too old now to have her beaus. How long are you going to bring your girls here, Peter?"

Peter thought of Kate, the warm beauty of her face, her dress' perfection, the deep breasts, the close suffocating thrall of her love and possession, the frightened voice picking at the beauty of silver fish in annoyance against his sister, the tight words, "I can't believe Peter said that," and cleared his throat to speak surely and finally.

"Kate is a nice girl, Kate is all right, I like Kate."

Their mother looked through the window beyond them, dreading the blinding oneness before her, shivered slightly, and left the room, seeking escape and a nerveless peace.

Peter and Lucia, as if in unconscious guilt closed the distance between them. Alone, their mother gone, they avoided each other's eyes and looked out into the bright day, without words, their mouths grave and obscure in relief and tenderness.

THE BALLADMAKER

by

R. C. Woods

A FULL moon hung over Aghalee. The trees and bushes along the path to town startled me with their vivid distinctness. Some were gray and silver in the light, some black as the shadows, and others the rich emerald of grass. Just where the path twists below the hill my eye caught what seemed to be a smaller bush growing closer to the ground. Its color was markedly distinct from that of the surrounding foliage. I had never before seen that exact shade of green, save once in the coat of a *clurican,* in Kilkenny.

As my footsteps drew me nearer, however, I perceived that it was no bush, but a man, a very woe-begone and abject man sitting on the log of a dead tree. He had on a bright green jacket and gray trousers and he was singing or rather chanting in a melancholy fashion:

"Faith, she was a lass only worshipped to be,
And the bravest of lads in the county was he."

He did not see me coming for his head was in his hands; so I stood quietly to watch him. The man paused once in his chant and addressed himself to the thin air.

"Pulse of my heart," he whispered gently, "come, then, little love of my soul."

I thought it was maybe some ghost he was courting or Catleen ni Houlihan herself.

Then he stood up and the moon shone clean on his face. I caught up my breath and was like to fall headlong with astonishment. For the man was young and beautiful, as beautiful as Bress, and yet it was not this beauty that drew my eyes to him.

He began chanting again in his melancholy voice till he noticed me and broke off, abruptly.

"I was making up a song," said he.

"Is it a poet you are, Mister?" I enquired.

"No, it is a balladmaker."

Then he asked me where was I going and I told him to Aghalee, and nothing would do but that he would go with me.

"I'm a stranger," I explained.

"So am I," he replied, "and so much the better that we make a company."

We walked on . . . in silence on my part for I was still a bit dazed at the handsomeness of the fellow.

"And I don't know a living soul in this land," he observed.

"You must have come far," I ventured.

"Oh, yes, very far, farther than you'd like to imagine."

"I've come over the sea, myself," I told him, "to visit an uncle whom I've never laid eyes on. He lives in Aghalee."

"I wonder now would there be the like of some feast or entertainment going on in the town the way I'd be getting a chance to earn a penny with my ballads?"

"We'll soon know that, I think. Come with me to my uncle's."

My uncle, a tall, brooding man, was waiting for me on the doorstep of his house. He heard the crunch of our feet in the path and he called out, "Is it you, Bernard?"

"It is," said I, stepping forward, "and this is someone I picked up on the way."

"Well, come inside, come inside, and a hundred thousand welcomes!"

He opened the door with that and the lamplight made a yellow track in the moonbeams.

My cousin was stirring a broth in the clean, narrow kitchen. She paid no heed whatever to me but went square up to the balladmaker, and said she, "My welcome before you, Bernard."

"It isn't Bernard that's in it," answered the balladmaker, smiling down at her. "Donal mac Ogue is my name."

Cathie, my cousin, blushed to the roots of her hair. A good deal of disappointment shone in the brown eyes she turned upon me. She was a little, plain wisp of a girl, but she made a dear, soft bulk in the crook of an arm I put about her.

"Have you naught but silence for Bernard, then?" asked her father.

"I am glad to see you," she murmured, meekly, but her eyes flew again to the face of the balladmaker.

Donal mac Ogue stayed exactly one month with my uncle. During that time it did not take a sharp eye to perceive that my cousin Cathie was eating her heart out for the fellow. He must have been blind, indeed, to have sat day after day across the table from Cathie without noting the wistfulness of her face. But the fact is that he did not see it, or, at any rate, to all appearances, he did not. He kept for her always that attitude of chivalrous regard that a man might have for any woman. Poor Cathie!

One night Donal mac Ogue brushed down his wrinkled, green jacket and turned to my uncle.

"I'll be off now," he remarked, as if the thought had just occurred to him. "The people will be having a fair, they tell me, tomorrow night in Ballinderry."

"If it's money from a fair you're after," spoke up my uncle, "stay with us. Next week we have the one big feast in Aghalee."

"What's that?" asked mac Ogue.

" 'Tis a pattern, the festival of Colmcille."

Donal mac Ogue remained, and a week later the four of us were in the good, thick crowd on the green before the church of St. Colmcille. He was in great luck, was mac Ogue, for though there were fiddlers and pipers *go leor,* the people had no balladmaker. It wasn't long then before the whole town in one big group was gathered in front of Donal mac Ogue.

A moment he stood up silent in his queer clothes, his beautiful face calling forth the comment of everyone. Then he began to chant a plaintive, ancient tale. We were laughing and crying all at once with whatever magic he had in its words and yet the tale was an old, old one the people must have heard a thousand or more times. It was of Finn and his friendship for Diarmuid before the faithless Grainne came between them. If there were fiddlers and pipers on the green, they might have left their music at home, for soon the people would have nothing but Donal mac Ogue and his chanting.

He gave them tale after tale till his voice grew faint and his cap was overflowing with coins. Then said he, "One last story I'll tell and it will be the *Colleen Ban.*"

Now you can get a Gaelic man to smile or weep with you if you have a good story. But if you want to fire his blood with madness or bruise his heart with a sorrow give him the story of his own Roseen Dhu.

by R. C. Woods

Donal mac Ogue was telling them he met a lady in the field. Her face would have been a wondrous, lovely face, said he, but that a dismal coldness, adamant, had frozen all her beauty like a mask. He told how her wild, black hair blew out in the wind and her crimson robe trailed in the dust of the field. While he gazed, astonished, at the stranger, she looked down at her feet, bound together with a chain, and then Donal mac Ogue knew she was the Roseen Dhu, the Colleen Ban. For all about her lay the bodies of Irishmen slain in the fight they have made for her. And she stood over them, a guileless, fettered Circe.

Donal told of her voice, that voice that means Death to those that listen to it, and how it rang out in one lone cry that rent the silence over every hill in Ireland. Only heroes know the desolation of that sound. The three waves of Erin heard it and the sea flung it back over the land. Somewhere Cuchulain stirred within his grave, thinking once more Queen Maeve and all her hosts came to do bloody battle as of yore.

When Donal mac Ogue had finished his chant, not a man or woman spoke. Cathie was twisting her white hand on my sleeve; my uncle was frowning and brooding. But Donal mac Ogue stole off in the crowd. The people shook themselves a little, as if awakening from a sleep, and my uncle spoke what was in the minds of all of them, "There is not a better balladmaker on the back of the world."

On the way home by the side of the church we saw women decorating a bush with colored tatters of silk. Cathie stopped to leave a bit of her dress in honor of Saint Colmcille. Who should be standing there with the women about him, if it weren't our man, Donal mac Ogue? He was talking with the bonniest colleen in Aghalee, Rose Adair, that was to wed Brian O'Donnell when the spring came. Brian himself loitered by with the blackest look on his face. I feared trouble; so I drew Cathie away.

The balladmaker did not return to our house. Indeed, we scarcely heard of him again until a month or two later when my uncle said at supper, "We will go early to the church tomorrow to witness the marriage of Donahue's daughter to Oscar Liffey. . . . He has got him another job, has Donal mac Ogue."

"To sing a ballad at the wedding breakfast after?" asked Cathie.

"Aye," replied her father. "But Rose Adair has broken her troth to Brian O'Donnell."

Cathie was silent, steadfastly regarding her father.

Said he, "She has eyes for no man in the town but Donal mac Ogue."

Now Cathie must have known of this gossip for it was common talk with the neighbors. But she went about in her quiet, reticent way, making ready her clothes for the morrow's wedding.

Next day I was thinking on poor Brian O'Donnell and his lost happiness as we sat at the marriage breakfast of Oscar Liffey. It is a wretched thing to go browsing among sad thoughts at a wedding. I turned to Oscar Liffey's bride, that the sight of her joy might blot out the morbid notions.

She was alone for one rare moment and I stepped over to her side. Oscar Liffey had an eye for beauty. His bride was little and dark and flowerlike. And if Rose Adair was bonny to look at, this bride of Liffey's was bonnier still. Her face was wonderfully sweet, in a way that a man could not easily draw his eye away from it. Nothing spiritual was in that loveliness, but a bewildering, exalted earthiness. She had the voluptuousness of a red rose.

She brushed aside my compliments with an impatient gesture.

"Who is that man just now come into the room?"

I followed her sharp glance as it fell upon the balladmaker.

"It's Donal mac Ogue," I told her, "he that will make music and poetry for your wedding."

Liffey's bride pondered a moment and then she muttered with a singular vexation, "Death of my soul, but I was quick to marry!"

Once Donal mac Ogue took his place at the feast, the guests forgot bride and groom and fell under the spell of his chanting. But now and then I thrust my mind from his songs to look at Liffey's bride. The people had formed a little circle about her and, what with the pushing and crowding, her chair was close up beside that of the balladmaker. What a pair of them! Her dark, flowerlike face was aglow watching the disturbing grace of Donal mac Ogue. She could not have heard the music of his words for her complete absorption in the perfection of his features.

Cathie clasped my arm and I knew that she, too, marked the glow of the bride and the light in the eye of the balladmaker.

If a man could take his attention for one moment from that chanting, he must notice that on all the earth there was one matched couple, Donal mac Ogue and the bride of Oscar Liffey.

Poor Oscar! He had one happy day, the morning of his wedding . . . and that before the balladmaker appeared at the feast. The coldness and

shrewishness with which his bride treated him after that was the desolation of his life and the scandal of Aghalee.

Yet no one could put a finger on one thing or another and say, "Donal mac Ogue, in this you are to blame." The balladmaker went serenely singing a song here and there and working havoc in a quiet, unconscious manner.

He put a great uneasiness on the men of Aghalee.

I remember stopping to talk with young Phelim Carrigan by the house of Tom Fibberdee. Tom's daughter Nellie was plucking flowers in the yard as I came up and Phelim was holding a basket to catch them. Whatever he was saying to Nellie, she was blushing redder than the flame-colored blooms in her hand.

"Here's a man for you," laughed Nellie, seeing me. "And come in, Bernard, to chat with my father."

"There's a man following," observed Phelim. "Is it someone you brought along?"

I looked behind. "It's Donal mac Ogue! I didn't see him coming this way."

"Who?" asked Phelim.

"Donal mac Ogue," I explained, and with that Phelim gave a strong push to Nellie Fibberdee, thrust her inside her house, and closed the door on her.

"Now," said he, "let Donal mac Ogue pass and my blessing on him."

The balladmaker stopped by the gate. His green coat was raggeder and his trousers had a fringe of tatters to them.

"I have walked a good piece of road, Bernard," he remarked. "I wonder would there be the like of some liquid about to wet a man's throat with?"

"A half a mile on is a house with a well," spoke up Phelim Carrigan. "They've cows, too, in the back yard of it. Bernard here can set you on the way."

We knocked at that place and were let in by the woman of the house, Mrs. Desmond, a plain, sturdy, sensible woman. She was drying her hands on her apron when mac Ogue asked for a cup of water. Water she brought for him, and milk, a grand spread also of cheese, meat, and bread. She stood stock still by the table, watching him eat and drink it all. The young Desmonds began to cry in the corner but she heeded them not a whit. Her breath came out sharply through her lips; her glance rested on the young brow of the balladmaker.

We struck out for home at last and, when I looked back at the house, she was there like a woman in a dream in the doorway.

I wished we had not stopped at Mrs. Desmond's, for her husband, John Desmond, was a very determined man.

A week or so before the time came when I should leave Ireland, an old sickness took hold of me. I lay in my uncle's house, weak as any babe, while Cathie kept tearful, constant watch over my pillow.

Each afternoon she gave me an acrid-tasting draught that plunged me into a deep slumber. As I grew more robust, however, the drug became less and less effective, until, though Cathie knew it not, I spent many an hour in a drowsy, half-waking stupor. Once as I lay thus, I heard a light step beyond the door that Cathie had left open. The step was followed by a voice, the silken voice of Oscar Liffey's bride.

"Cathie, ye are alone in the house?"

And then my cousin's voice, "Hush, he is sleeping!"

The bride of Liffey began to speak in a low, whispering tone. Past the door I could catch a glimpse of her in the narrow kitchen. "Cathie," she faltered, "if one kind heart beats in Aghalee it is yours."

Cathie turned a pale, quiet face to her.

"They are going to cry out bitter things on me presently," went on Liffey's bride, "and, Cathie, when they do, will ye say a soft word for me?"

I could not catch my cousin's answer.

"It will hurt me in my happiness," went on Liffey's bride, "to know that not one soft word is spoken for me when I am away."

At Cathie's surprised stare, she continued. "My husband must go to the north next month on a journey, and . . . and when he returns, a great shame will be his, for I shall be gone with Donal mac Ogue!"

Cathie was deathly silent.

"Ye may well look aghast, Cathie. Ye have never loved and, oh, ye don't know what a restless torment it is."

She wrung her two hands.

"And Donal . . . he . . . he will do this?" murmured my cousin, fearfully.

"Death of my soul! I have not said to the balladmaker, 'Will ye fly with me?' But I have seen the hunger in his eye and I know who will run to me when I beckon. Do ye think he would refuse?" She held up her dark face proudly and I raised my own head to look at her. My life! she was bonny. Her presence was like pungent fragrance in a man's nostrils. If she

had called *me* (and Cathie not by) I know I must have followed her over the world's ridge.

My poor cousin struggled to speak calmly.

"You've a grand face, Alanna. But will he . . . the balladmaker forget all lawfulness and loyalty?"

"I am forgetting lawfulness and loyalty for *him.*" The voice of Liffey's bride began to break. "Besides, Love knows no law. And . . . I will make up to Donal for aught he leaves behind."

She caught Cathie's hand. "Ye are crying because I will do what ye would never do . . . or because I am a wicked woman. But ye have not loved, I'm telling ye, and, Cathie, Cathie, next month when Oscar goes, oh, ye will not think too hard of me? When the neighbors cry out evil things on the black name of Liffey's bride, say a soft word, Cathie?" She was weeping in my cousin's arms. "If a kind heart beats in the town it is yours, Cathie."

A moment more and I heard her light step departing. The whole scene was like a bad dream to me. I was constrained to pity Liffey's bride, but remembering her loveliness I trembled for the strength of will of the balladmaker.

The day when I would leave Aghalee I watched poor Cathie as she nervously packed my bag. John Desmond came in to say goodbye. He had something on his mind and it took him a long time before he burst out with it.

"Don't ye think," he asked my uncle, "this town has had enough of poetry and singing? Little work is done in the kitchens, I tell you, when the wives do be sitting, love-sick, at the windows."

My uncle looked at him.

"My own brood of little Desmonds," said John, "run hungry and uncared-for on the roadside while Herself sits a-learning the ballads of this Donal mac Ogue. She had strong sense in her one time, but now when I come in, famished for my supper, she recites at me the *Colleen Bán.*"

My uncle sighed a bit for he was fond of the balladmaker.

"Let me tell you," cried John Desmond, darkly, as he was leaving, "this town has had enough of poetry and singing."

Cathie's kiss for me was sad and sisterly and abstracted. In the late afternoon I bade farewell to her and to my uncle and started off for the ship which would take me over the sea.

Where the path dips before scaling the hill, I saw a green splash of

color in the roadway. It was Donal mac Ogue's jacket, true enough, and the gloomy, ragged, woe-begone man under it was Donal mac Ogue himself. He had a crumpled appearance. I wouldn't say that he was bruised; it wasn't as if a body had given him a black eye or a blooded nose. He hadn't a black eye. But he looked as if an avalanche had fallen on him.

"Ho," I called out, "you're leaving, too?"

"I am," he sighed, and he cupped a dismal face in his hands.

"They'll not find your like again in the town yonder."

"No," he muttered, wrathfully. But even working in his anger his features were handsomer than any man's. "They drove me from the place," said he, "the men who could not keep their own. But if I were to stand up and begin chanting now, I could empty Aghalee of women. I've a mind. . . ."

"Stop, mac Ogue!" I commanded. " 'Twas I that brought you into this town; let us depart from it peaceably, together."

The angry veins stood out on his brow.

"I'll go," he said, furiously. "But I shall make such a ballad of Aghalee will bring down the heads of the people in shame."

In another day I was taken once more with the fever and had to stop over at the house of a farmer in an Irish sea-side town. Two weeks I lay turning on my bed and when I got up stronger at last, it was raining and my ears were struck by a tormenting sound.

"What bell is that tolling?" I asked the farmer.

"God knows," he replied. "A kind of poet fellow was sick in the place . . . along with you in a fever. May be it's his passing they're ringing. If it is so," he added, "it would be a great pity, for even in his sick ravings he could make up grander songs than I have heard before in Ireland."

If it is so . . . I thought on Cathie and Rose Adair, on Oscar Liffey's bride and Mrs. Desmond.

"He had got some bad blows somewhere," continued the farmer. "He'd a fearful clout on the back of his head would give him his death anyway."

"Did he come into town with me?" I enquired.

The farmer had not heard the time of his coming. Neither did he learn his name. But I knew in my heart it was Donal mac Ogue. There is not a better balladmaker on the back of the world.

THE INDIANS

by

Whit Burnett

MY father has been in my mind for a long time. He tromps around for a while, a little heavily and undecidedly, and then he leaves—there are so many things in a city a person has to think about.

We used to fish together, the two of us. There, quietly, in the shade of a big cottonwood tree on the bank of a stream that went slowly through the Utah valley. And then again sometimes we trailed up Currant Creek where the canyon was cut like a gash in rocks, and where we worked like a devil in white water for every fish we caught.

I remember how a few years ago when I went back on a visit I was dressed up pretty fancy, in a fine new suit. I was getting along then. We went downtown together and bought some cheap pants and fish lines and he said to the fellow in the store: "This is the kid. He's been away working in New York City for a couple of years." That was all. He was a little abashed.

We are both mixed in our minds, I think sometimes, though we've never mentioned it. He is a good-sized man. Sunburned and blue-eyed, with stocky shoulders. I'm thin as a pencil and I never add weight. I look like the Dane who was my mother's father. He's more like his own English dad. But when we fish we amble along together, away from people entirely, and we don't say much. There's that about fishing: a person forgets to talk, thinking of the next pool ahead, and searching the waters for the right riffle.

On Currant Creek one morning, I remember, we got out of the tent at dawn. It was cold and clear and we crawled along over the rocks up past the beaver dams. They bit so well we forget about breakfast. At noon we were weak with the heat. We started on down to the camp. But, as we jogged our heavy boots back in the burning noon, our bellies gave way. We were loaded with fish, but no food, and the Old Man was pretty near all-in.

"I guess this'll about be the last fishin' trip I make," he said. "I don't know . . . the older a man gets, the less he seems to care about fishin'."

He was a dejected-looking spectacle. His old summer hat was squashed, wet, around his ears. His face was burned the color of a hazel nut and sweat trickled down his neck into a ring of dirt and fish-blood stains on his shirt. The boots had blistered one heel.

We ate three eggs each and fried a mess of fish on the brush fire at camp. And then we went out on the stream again as the shade spread over the canyon. We couldn't sit long with a stream like that beside us. It was a pretty stream, swift and tourmaline clear.

"My God," said my father, "I musta had a whale on that time! Did you see the way that bugger pulled the tip?"

My father's father was born in London. But he emigrated to New Zealand with his wife. They took along Granny, who was Welch and wiry. Then, when they had tired of the life in New Zealand, they came to America. When Granny was ninety-nine, she fell out of bed getting up one night for a bit of a snack to eat. That was out in the West. She broke her neck and died.

Granny was a rare old crone, who remembered out of New Zealand the strange cry of the natives. "*Cooey, Cooey,*" she would say. "I say, *Cooey,* Father well? Mother working?" She used to read the newspapers at ninety-nine without glasses, and was always wanting to go places.

We were always wanting to go places—all of us.

One day in July, I was twelve then, we were lounging around downstairs in the cool cement basement in the house my dad had built on the hill. There were just the three of us, my father and my mother and myself. It was a hot, still day. Suddenly my father broke out:

"For two pins I'd go to Blackfoot, Idaho!"

My mother put down the darning and went upstairs. She came back with two pins.

"I suppose now you'll say you meant safety pins."

He looked at the pins, and put his hands on his knees and said:

"Well, by damn, Annie, why don't we? There's nothing doing here in this town right now. My feet's been itchin' all summer. Why don't we go to Blackfoot, Idaho?"

A strange sound of a word, then—Blackfoot. Blackfoot, Idaho.

My mother put an ad in the *Tribune* on Sunday and on Monday we rented the house to a policeman and his wife. Friday the three of us were on the Oregon Short Line bound for Blackfoot, Idaho.

by Whit Burnett

It is easy to pick out in my mind the trip to Blackfoot, Idaho, from the other trips we made and those I've made since.

The train was dingy and we sat in the chair car. Red plush. Dusty. The creaking of the sleepers underneath. Rolling on and on and on the whole hot afternoon away, and then the night outside, and us diving in the lunch-basket for our sandwich dinner.

When the conductor came through it was up to me—and I was gangling into thirteen years—to crouch over close to the window and pretend, as my mother nudged, to be absorbed in the scenery.

It was cellar-black outside, and when the train man left we all grinned over our absorption in the scenery.

"Big for half-fare? So he is," my mother answered. "But that's how he is."

I was ashamed then, while now I can laugh at how we did that trick. I wished then I had had some money of my own. I kept wanting to say: "Here, I won't crouch down this way. I'm going to ride like a man. I'd rather pay a whole full fare!"

We did not argue. It was only a feeling, like the feelings a kid has. The night went on, and the train getting colder in the rain.

"Well," said my father, now and then, "I guess we're getting pretty well along to Blackfoot."

And then, a little later:

"Well, I guess it won't be long before we are right in Blackfoot."

We got the bags all down.

Blackfoot, Idaho.

The train slowed down and a light outside blinked at our eyes. A frame station, bleak and horrible, with watery yellow lights. And then a full jolt of a stop.

Rain.

My father standing over my shoulder peering out into the dark. My father nervously seated.

"Hmmmmmm," said my father.

We all looked out.

There were six Indians, huddled in their blankets, rain on their faces. Huge, scowling-looking fellows. They stood there in the station light, dumbly, glaring through the rain at us, garish, drizzled, tough.

"Hmmmmm," said my father. And he drew away from the window and sat down.

"I don't know as if I think so much of Blackfoot, Idaho."

He scowled a bit, too. And then he put his hands on his knees and sat there looking at my mother and me. . . .

"Maybe we better go right on through," he said, "to Idaho Falls. We could go and look up Aunt Lizzie."

Aunt Eliza had a little lumber house just out of town. We found it after questioning directions and marveling at the boardwalk that lined the main street of Idaho Falls then, a boardwalk in bad repair which tried to keep the townfolk in the spring partly out of gumbo mud.

Aunt Eliza was a great hand for religion. For equality and western neighborliness. She put us up. And every meal it was interesting, for she was adequate but exact.

There was only a very little food in every serving dish, and when early it was gone among us and we sat blankly and with hunger conversing of something else, Aunt Eliza, who had a minimum of appetite and no very large purse, would fold her hands and settle back.

"Now, isn't that fine! Just enough! We always have just enough!"

The second afternoon my father and I went out for a walk.

"We'll go and look over the main drag," he said.

We saw the whole town. It was bleary, too.

"Ain't they got a river here?" I asked him.

"Sure, the Snake River runs through this burg somewhere. I read in the *Tribune* once where a herd of circus elephants crossin' the bridge busted loose and half of 'em went into the Snake."

We started for the river, following a small canal out of town. The sun warmed us, pleased us, and we walked bigly, explorers in another man's land, a state strange and new to us, not our own.

"I remember the time," my father began, "when me and Claude Mason was up in the head of Hardscrabble canyon and we got snowed in . . . hunting pine hens. . . ."

He told a long story.

I began to think of the Indians, with their blankets and their hard, rough-looking faces.

When we got to the river it was mud-dirty from the rains and we were

both disappointed. We peered down over the side of the bank. Then we went down close, and we looked for a while for small fish that usually play around the surface. We could see no fish.

We sat down finally on the bank.

"Not even a cussed minnie," said my father.

We got up and stood around. It was very quiet. He looked out over the flat sand lands where the dry dead tumbleweeds were moving in a dusty wind. There were no houses where we were. It was melancholy. We were lost, in a strange, large way. It was odd, too, knowing, as we did, where the town was, and where the trail.

"I guess we better hit straight back for the house," he said, at last. "They'll be startin' supper pretty soon and your mother'll be worrying what's happened to us."

We scuffed through the sagebrush. We walked for a long time. We did not talk. There was no humor in the underbrush, skirting us like shaggy soldiers in the desert. A rabbit ran off alone and we stood still and watched it.

"A Jack," said my father.

And then we plugged along.

Blackfoot. I had got again somehow to thinking about Blackfoot.

We left Idaho Falls. We spent a little time in a smaller town up state. My mother opened a bakery business and it kept my dad and me busy selling lemon pies to the bohunks on the railroad spur they were building.

We stood it as long as we could, and then we closed down. My mother's heart gave out, and my father was insistent. Hell with the money, he said. No more work like that. We sold out. And we went back home. . . .

An odd trip. We all felt pretty proud, in a way. We'd made some money. And we'd seen some country, when all the neighbors had stuck at home, watering the lawns and doing the same old things. We used to talk it over. My dad, I remember, sitting in the rocking chair back there in Idaho Falls arguing deep things out with Aunt Lizzie, amused and yet, perhaps, concerned.

"A certain amount of neighborliness, yes," he'd agree. "And the Golden Rule. Nobody ever figgered out anything much better than that. But take Jonah. There's your Bible for you. And the loaves and fishes. And tappin' that solid rock for water. Them things don't stand to reason."

"There are lots of things, Ben," said Aunt Lizzie, "that don't stand to reason."

My father rocked and sat, and thought things over. And then they would talk of other things more practical like mine claims, or growing towns, or strange dreams.

Aunt Lizzie never served enough to eat. She died a few years ago, they wrote me in a letter. She was then in her seventies.

In New York a person gets no chance to go fishing. Even if a person did, eastern fishing isn't fishing. A person gets too busy. And there are no wild western streams, crashing down a mountain canyon. I remember my father coming down Currant Creek from the beaver dams. There were good holes in Currant Creek, but you had to climb to reach them. There was no set-pole fishing there, lazy like an office chair. You pushed up the canyon, dog-tired maybe, climbing over boulders, breaking trail, and there was something to it, after all, when you turned a bend and came across a riffle or a pool that glistened and danced, begging for a hackle or a coachman. And then, luck or no luck, going on again, upstream and better holes, till dark.

I remember my father coming down the trail to camp that hot noon, slunching along tiredly in the boots wearing blisters on his heels—for they were boots we borrowed and too big for him. And there are times when already I have felt the same way: a man would give his right arm to go fishing sometimes, and the time passes and he never gets away. And then the summer goes. And he forgets the importance of a good fish stream. And then another summer in a city, like New York, and he begins to think maybe he will never fish again. The older you get the less you think, somehow, it means.

But now and then my feet get to itching. For change. Like fishing. Traveling. I've been out on the road once or twice. But that is not really traveling. . . .

I have a big offer now, and for days and days I've been worrying about it. It would mean getting out, traveling all around, alone, in strange wayoff places, Mexico, for instance, Central America. . . . By George, it makes a ripple roll along a person's spine just to think of it!

But I don't know. I'm not so bad off here. I've been a long time working up in this place, this city, and a person gets to know a few people. You get some pictures on the walls and some books.

I wrote my father about the offer, and that's what got me started. He

wrote back. And it puzzles me, because the Old Man would never put a feather in my way.

"Take them Greezers," was the way he put it, "blowing each other full of bullet holes night and day. That's all they got to do down there—stand around and wait for somebody to take a pot shot at."

There's lots of rumpuses down there, all right, from all reports. But a person never knows until he gets on the ground. I don't know. I'll probably go.

It's funny, the dream I had last night.

I dreamed about those cussed Indians in Idaho standing around the railroad station. Selling beads, I guess they were. Bleary-eyed, that town was. Blackfoot, Idaho. Still, when I woke up, I got to thinking and I got a kind of kick out of it for a minute, thinking I'd just take this job and when I got down to some real tough dump like Vera Cruz send the Old Man a postcard dated: "Blackfoot, Idaho."

But, I don't know. I guess I wouldn't actually send one. Even if I decided to go. There are some things it takes a person ten or fifteen years to figure out, and the Old Man comes tromping into my head at night every now and then, wandering around, fishing sometimes, the way we did, and then sometimes I can see him just sitting there in the train, with his hands on his knees, when we passed up Blackfoot. . . .

THE FAILURE

by

A. Averchenko

IT was a small, semi-dark drug-store.

A bony, long-nosed chap with a face that wore a perpetually sorrowful look, asked:

"What can I do for you, sir?"

"Coughdrops."

He took a container from the shelf, thought a while, and put it back; then he took a second and a third.

"From which container shall I give you?" he murmured, thoughtfully. "Well, I'll risk it. I'll give you some from the second."

Before I paid him, a husky man entered, holding a package in his hand.

"Here is your handiwork, take it," the man said, throwing the package on the counter.

The morose owner stole a frightened glance at him and opened the package.

"A dead mouse," he said, laughing bitterly. "What did it die of?"

"You ought to know!" bellowed the customer. "Listen to this," and he turned to me, "I bought a piece of soap from this faker, last night. After I came home and opened it I noticed that I still had a piece of the old soap. I used the remainder and left the new soap on the washstand and went to sleep. I awoke this morning and what do I find but traces of mice's teeth on the soap and right near it, two dead mice. . . . I have brought one of them as evidence!"

"Why are you worried?" I tried to calm him. "Thanks to the soap, you have two gnawers less."

"Two gnawers? But if I had used the soap yesterday, it would have been me instead of the mice."

The door opened and a third customer came in.

"Tell me," he asked the proprietor gently, "this is the only drug-store on the street, is it not?"

"Yes," answered the proprietor, made bold by the gentle tone, "my pharmacy is the only one on this street."

"Oh, then it was here that I bought a wonderful hair tonic to make the hair grow?"

"Yes, here," smiled the pharmacist.

"Then to kill you, is not enough, you idiot, for this medicine," roared the man, throwing a jar at him, "damn you!"

"Why, doesn't it make the hair grow?" asked the proprietor, who, expecting the gesture, had hidden under the counter.

"It grows all right. Oh yes, it grows. Such hair should grow on your father's grave."

"Why, what happened?" I asked.

"What happened? I am green. Instead of a head, I have a green field. Yesterday, a butterfly followed me for two blocks. I wouldn't be surprised if grasshoppers will breed in my grass. Just look!"

He took off his hat and, really, I have never seen a more beautiful green color.

"Scoundrel!" he thundered. "You sold me a tonic for growing hair and, instead, I become green!"

"You sold me rat poison and the rats eat it like hot-cakes and grow fat. We must teach such as you."

He grabbed hold of the proprietor's head and dragged him forward, starting to beat him. The soap customer looked on favorably, then rolling up his sleeves, he began to help the green man. They hit him so diligently that I was bored looking on.

"Well, that is enough," I said peacefully. "Better rest up."

Both stopped beating him, sat down and lit cigarettes.

"I hit him for the hair and what did you hit him for?"

"For soap. The rascal sold me a cake of soap and I found a garland of dead mice this morning."

"Really?" exclaimed the green man, happily. "I have a lot of rats in my apartment and can't get rid of them. Suppose you give me your soap, and I will give you my paint."

"Does it color cloth?"

"I should say; I used a towel on my head and it became entirely green. We washed it with soap and it won't come out."

"That's an idea. I'll dye my gray coat green and use it as a hunting coat."

Concluding this strange transaction, both men gave the pharmacist a beating and left.

Only the proprietor and I remained.

I have a very good heart; that is why I said to him:

"There are two black-and-blue marks on your face. Better apply a lead solution to them."

"I am afraid to," he answered timidly.

"Why?"

"I have a bottle of lead solution, but am afraid to use it. What if I put a compress of this solution on the painful parts and hair or teeth would start to grow?"

We began to talk.

"I am terribly unlucky," said the proprietor pitifully. "For instance: Once I hungered. An owner of a freak museum hired me and billed me as the 'Famous Food-Abstainer.' I was put into a glass case and was supposed to stay there for forty days without eating. But at night I became so hungry, that I broke the glass, stole into my employer's room and ate a ham, a goose and some twenty eggs. Then he began to bill me as the 'Phenomenal Eater.' Things went well, but I ate so much that my employer went into bankruptcy. . . . And so is my whole life. . . . I try to do one thing and something else happens. I made a soap and it is good for rats; I discovered a tonic for hair-growing and it is a good dye.—Now I know a young girl, beautiful and modest, in fact so modest that she never shows the slightest bit of her body. . . . No low-cut dresses, no insinuating talk. A wonderful match for me—but I am afraid. . . ."

"But what are you afraid of?"

"That something may happen."

"But what could happen?"

"She will either turn out to be a man or will have two husbands living, or——"

"That is sheer foolishness. On the contrary, a wife like that can help you. You had better marry her before someone else does."

"Do you—think so?"

We parted friends.

At home I remembered the coughdrops. I put one in my mouth, but as it did not taste good, I spat it out on the floor.

Then I began to pace the floor and thought of the strange fate of my new acquaintance. Suddenly I could not move one foot, as if it had become one with the floor. I threw my weight to the right, to the left, but all in vain. I sat down on the floor, took off my shoe and started to inspect it. Sure enough—the coughdrop.

The coughdrops came in handy; when a vase would break, or the foot of a chair would split, a coughdrop fixed it so, that it became stronger than when new.

Not so long ago, while passing my friend's drug-store, I remembered him and walked in.

"Hello, I dropped in to tell you that if you will sell your coughdrops as a glue, you will make lots of money."

"I knew it!" he said sorrowfully, wringing his hands. "Something would happen. Do you remember what I told you of the young lady I knew? Well, I married her."

"Oh, congratulations. Well, is everything all right? She is not a man? Has she any living husbands?"

He smiled woefully.

"Worse!"

"You frighten me!"

"She is tattooed! And how! There is not a particle of her body that looks like flesh. I can't embrace her—it is as if I were embracing a Chinese screen designed with dragons."

"Remarkable. Listen! You could charge admission and have the public come to see her."

"That's right. But instead of that, I married her. It is always so with me: I do what I shouldn't and what would be good, I think of too late."

Translated from the Russian
by Alfred Fox

NO FINAL WORD

by

Alvah C. Bessie

DURING the pauses in the game, while Dr. Rogers went into the trance so familiar to those who play at chess, knowing nothing but the way the pieces move, Blake looked over the doctor's shoulder at the window-panes, streaming with rain, and listened to the hiss of the water against the glass. Like a sleeping dog he listened over his own shoulder, anticipating that sound from the bedroom, regular as the ticking clock. There was no sound, only the dripping of the rain from the eaves and the creak of the floor under their feet when they shifted in their chairs, and an occasional sigh from the woman, already dressed in her starched white dress, sitting behind him in the corner, and the rustle of the magazine she was reading, waiting for the thing they were all awaiting. Watching the doctor's sleepy face Blake thought, This is like waiting for a guest at a party—everyone ill at ease and anxious to be enjoying himself, only the expected guest has not arrived. Enjoy!

The doctor cleared his throat and Blake sat forward in his chair. That was the signal, he was going to move now, and rising from his own trance he quickly surveyed the board, glancing up and down the files, wondering whether the doctor would move his queen's pawn again and lose his other knight. "Now," said the doctor, looking up, "if I move that pawn, you'll eat my horse, won't you?" Blake frowned and the doctor hastened to explain: "That's what the Chinese say—they say a man is eaten, not taken. They have a lot more pieces to this game, too. I used to play it a lot when I was—"

When you were in China, yes, I know about that. *Old Doctor Rogers,* old Mrs. Murdock said, *spent ten years missionatin' in Chiny. He's a good doctor* minister too, *heart o' gold, 'll go anywheres any time o' day or night. 'member when Miz Taylor was sick, there was four feet o' snow on the roads, in the middle of the night it was, way up to hell an' gone in the woods.* . . . Yes, yes, it's an old story . . . his car got stuck, he got pulled out, stuck

again, he got a cutter but the horse went up to its rump in the soft snow, snowshoes, walked, floundered, seven miles up and over the drifts all night like a horse he worked and what did he bring into the world? an idiot, a hydrocephalic idiot now the butt of the town's jokes; not one but speaking of poor Simey imitates poor Simey's speech: I-don't-reckon-I-could-do-tha-a-t-nohow (slobber). It was a great pity, old Mrs. Murdock said, it was a visitation o' God in His infinite mercy. Praise the Lord, let us glorify Him for His ways are inscrutable.

The doctor lifted his brows, sudden glee lit in his dull eyes and, pouncing with delight on David Blake's king's pawn he said, "Check and *gardez!*" Blake sat back in his chair and bit his lip. I should have foreseen that, I can get out of that—like fencing with a poor fencer, the good fencer can easily be beaten by a poor fencer, he doesn't fence according to Hoyle. Instead, he listened to the rain, and then, yes, now, there was an unmistakable groan from the bedroom and he moved his chair back. The woman in white, Mrs. Pfeiffer, German, rose saying, "Yes?" and went into the bedroom, and a low voice came from the bedroom, his wife's voice, saying, "Don't mind me. Finish your game, It's nothing at all yet."

"Check and *gardez,*" the doctor said, rubbing his hands. "When I was in Han-Kow I used to play this game a lot . . . out of practise now. Smart little fellows, these Chinks, can see a move before—"

"Resign," David Blake said, resting wearily back in the chair. The doctor's face fell, "Well, now," he said, "that's no way to play chess. Of course, you're bound to lose your queen, but you can easily get out of that hole—you've got two rooks, two horses and a bishop to my queen and horse."

Mrs. Pfeiffer came to the door and said, "Dr. Rogers, it's time." The doctor rubbed his hands. "Well," he said, "we'll finish this game some other time, Mr. Blake. I'd sort of like to see you get out of that pickle. You didn't have your mind on the game, I'll reckon." He saw Blake standing before him, his face white, and said, "Better look to that kitchen stove, young fellow, and see if my glove's boiled up."

Watching the red glove flutter in the steaming water, like a bloated, severed hand, he This is common as the dirt we spring of. This is to be expected, what we have all expected, waiting these long dull months, nervous at night and springing awake at the slightest touch, eyes awake to the night at the window-pane, the feel of cool air through the room, the ticking of the clock. Now? is it, darling, now? No, not yet. . . . *You sure picked a time to*

call me, Mrs. Blake; brought a baby last night, night before a pneumonia patient, baby the night before . . . three nights now. I bring 'em and I see 'em go. Never sleep. This is his third night up. *We Work While You Sleep.* It is a miracle, he decided, unexplainable by the laws of physiology. He lifted the iron lid and slid a birch stick into the fire-box, removed the pan with its glove to one side of the stove and lifted the lid on the basin of gleaming instruments . . . needles, gut, hemostats, syringe; bubbles jeweled the steel and the bottom of the basin. *You studied medicine, didn't you, Mr. Blake? I prepared for it. Thought I'd heard you use the terminology.* Dilatation cervix foetus placenta amnion.

I could have avoided that, he thought, by moving that pawn two moves before. Finish your game! she said; the guest has not arrived. The Wedding Guest. Mrs. Pfeiffer came into the kitchen and he whirled on his heel to face her. The gaunt face, the broken teeth, good nurse, the thin lined hands, large, veined. "It's beginning now," she said, "she's making real progress now." From the bedroom there arose a sound—unlike all other sounds—a rising tide (I bring 'em and I see 'em go) of sound, singing and wavering in the now quiet night, no rain, no sounding wind, no water on the glass, only a fresh breeze that stirred the curtains in the kitchen and was cool on his face through the open door. Quietly, he stepped onto the porch (hearing The Sound), and closed the screen-door softly behind him. You'll wake the dead, he thought, you'll wake the dead in the valley, listening to his own feet on the sagging loose boards, seeing the night fall away before him. . . . childbed, deathbed, childbed, deathbed. . . . Swiftly he slapped his own face and reached into his pocket for a cigarette. . . . you can walk around the house and climb the bank where the nasturtiums are blooming and look into the window. *He* would have his back to the window, *she* would have her back to the window, *you* could see. . . . He dragged on the cigarette, watching the receding darkness over the hills, the dark trees, a wan moon scudding swiftly behind black clouds, moving swiftly and staying in the same place, like the moon through the windows of a train.

The brook down the bank roared in the quiet night, hissing on its stones, and down the valley a fox barked. He looked to the east, but glanced immediately away. Twelve o'clock. Six o'clock it was. *We've got a long night ahead of us, Mr. Blake. I'll drop off if you don't find something to amuse me. Can you play chess? Why sure, I used to play it a lot when I was in . . .* Even asleep he beat you. . . . you could easily walk around the house

and climb the bank where. . . . He stepped off the porch, then, overcome by a sensation of shame and fear, stepped back on it again. It is now the very witching hour of night when. . . . Standing on tiptoe, he looked down into the valley, where in the intermittently flashing moon the stones gleamed in the churchyard, on and off . . . mist rose from the wet earth and floated off the land and the fox barked again. From inside the house, deep in the secret womb of the house, a sound arose, singing and wavering, higher than before, strangely melodious, and he felt that once more he had clenched his fists and felt his palms wet with perspiration. Why don't I feel anything?

Indoors, he put another chunk in the stove, saw there was a long oblong tank standing on it and lifted the lid. That was what I was afraid of, looking impersonally at the large instruments in the still cold water, their broad blades, their gleaming black handles. That is to be expected—complicated history. Through the kitchen he walked quietly, but she heard him, and she said, "Poor David," from the room, "I hear him walking up and down," and immediately he was ashamed . . . one *who by the art of known and feeling sorrows, Am pregnant to good pity.* That she should feel sorry for *him* affected him immediately with a desire to laugh and he put his hand over his mouth, clinging with the other hand to the upright door-frame, leaning forward into the room where the chess-men stood on the little table, silhouetted in the yellow light from the bedroom. Then he became aware that, sitting in the chair behind the table was the doctor, asleep, his arms on the chair-arms, his heavy head resting back. TEND TO YOUR PATIENT TEND.

There was a murmur of voices from the lighted doorway, and immediately the doctor was awake, with a muttered phrase, and crossed into the room. He dodged back guiltily, like a small boy found in the jam-closet, and heard her say, "Poor David, I can hear him," cautiously tiptoeing away into the kitchen as her voice rose to a wail, saying, "It's coming again, oh dear me, it's com-ing a-gain, *doctor!*" "Yes, Mrs. Blake," the doctor said, "that's right, everything is all right—" and through his voice speaking there rose the other voice, passing from an understandable and human sound (help me, doctor) imperceptibly to a wail that hung high in the house and lingered in his ears like a popular song and then, decrescendo, easily, inevitably soared down: "Oh," it said, "dear me, dear me, dear me, dear me."

He sat, clenching his hands, on the sofa in the living-room, looking at the lighted doorway and the shadows crossing it, seen in a static dream-

state that would endure forever, hearing the low voice of the doctor and the nurse, and then silence. The moon, free of the clouds, lay in the window of the dark room, making pale squares on the carpet, and remembering, he leaped up and went into the kitchen, lifted the lid and laid another stick as the nurse entered the room. "It has red hair, Mr. Blake," she said. "Is it . . born?" "No . . . oh, no," she said, "only on the pains (she blushed) you know, we can . . . see. When the pains go away . . ." She prepared a basin of hot water, poured into it a dark-brown viscid fluid that sent up waves of sharp odor into the room, and left. "Very difficult," she said, over her shoulder. He tiptoed back again to the living-room, standing at the door and leaning in, aware of a sensation of being sealed in concrete, fixed for life in an unalterable posture, muscles rigid and confined to that doorway and kept from that bedroom as inexorably as though he had been chained to the wall. This must stop, this must stop; this cannot go on any longer.

"Yes, Helen," the doctor was saying, "yes, of course, it helped, of course, Helen, it helped. You are a fine brave girl." "I'm sorry," she said in her everyday voice (he lifted his brows to hear it) "to cut up such a fuss." "Don't think of it, you are coming along fine." Childbed, deathbed, childbed. He rapped his knuckles sharply on the frame of the door, hearing the wind rising again outside the house and the ticking of the clock. . . . Time flies; you cannot, their flight is too irregular, he said to himself, his lips moving. Three o'clock. On an impulse, he went to the kitchen door and looked into the east, but there was no faint glow . . . the matin to be nigh. It was dark in the east and the moon was standing in the heavens, and lo! if you listened, you could hear the earth rolling on its axis. The glow-worm shows the matin to be nig—no, near, and 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire. No . . . but suppose I *had* moved that pawn, there is the barest possibility he might have advanced his queen's bishop and—

This must not be; this simply must not be. All over the world—well, not all over, but over a range of perhaps two thousand miles, men and women are asleep, unaware that this is happening, sweetly oblivious of the fact that I, my wife and I, are caught in this snare like the grinding of a mill. I cannot walk into that room and say, This must stop; you cannot let this thing go on; it is obscene . . . you can walk around the house and up the bank where the nasturtiums are blooming . . . Last year's pleasure on wheels, ah no . . . (The Sound).

In the kitchen he looked into the pack of cigarettes and was astonished

to discover that he had only smoked six (why can't I feel something), and heard the voices conversing in low tones, heard them speaking of inconsequential matters: how the pneumonia patient had died: "No," Dr. Rogers said, "there was nothing to be done. Oxygen was out of the question and too expensive." "Yes," Mrs. Pfeiffer said, "We have movies now over our way, every Thursday evening in the Grange Hall." Even Helen, yes Helen said, "We sometimes feel we'd like to see a movie, but then we have no car and so— oh, oh dear me or dear me now it's going to begin again, oh dear—" He pushed his fingers in his ears and opened his mouth *cannon's roar* thinking, If she screams I will go in there! I will go in there and tell them to stop this thing. "Now all right dear," the doctor said (dear!) now all right dear, everything is all right, that's right dear, that's right, yes yes."

When the sound had tapered off and (you'll wake the dead, rising in the mist in the valley from their graves, floating off the land like mist) the house was still, he lay back on the couch in the living-room, smelling the hot oil of the kerosene lamps in the bedroom, thinking this is proper *obscene* to the night, night-born, this can very well go on at night but I will not let the glow-worm shows the matin . . .

No final word may ever be spoken, no image drawn from which the mind may leap as from a springboard, to touch truth and destruction at once. A man (Dr. Rogers) in all the fullness of his intuition TEND YOUR PATIENT all the grasp of his sympathy (dear, yes dear) may sit by the laboring woman (Helen, my wife Helen) and hear with terror the first cry of the new-born (when); he may sit and hold the hand of the moribund (dying of pneumonia) and take her last breath into his own lungs and watch with astonishment and envy the relaxation of the features (childbed) and the decrescendo of expression, till what lies before him is an effigy that could never have lived—all these things (dear me dear me dear me) *this will have to stop* he may apprehend with his bowels and touch with his hands, yet he remains an individual (thousands of them, sleeping on their backs from here to Omaha, snoring) incapable except in the remotest fashion of personal identification with the rest. He sleeps snoring and as he sleeps multitudes die and are reborn— true identification would remove the possibility of sleep oh let me pray, sweet Jesus, let me pray! while a single man or woman was agonizing. It is only in the sound of the (4 o'clock) telephone wires, or on star-filled nights or moon-filled nights that we may, for an infinitesimal flash of time feel a sense of immediate identification with the earth— through

some inner vibration that stirs with the wind in the wires; through an awareness beyond knowledge that the earth is rolling through space, that its motion *can* at moments be physically apprehended. Only the dead may be loved.

He pressed his face into the couch and carefully enunciated the words: "This-cannot-go-on; I-will-not-permit-this-to-go-on; I have sinned . . . I have sinned . . . We do not want this;" she, my wife, laboring to rid her womb, helping (yes dear, that helped a lot— very soon now, very soon) to bring into the world— what? a hydrocephalic idiot, a whore, a fool, a professor of political economy?

At such times there comes an exultation too deep for overt laughter tears you fool, tears too innately religious to permit of movement. A rationalization from the facts. A man were a fool or a woman were a fool were he not aware that these perceptions are capable of 'rational' explanation (under-nourishment? neurosis?) more a fool if he she accepted them — for it would entail a sacrifice of something more precious than the bread we eat, more sweet to the thirsting body than clear water.

Through the small dark rooms there came a breath of fresh air *Crescendo* that stirred the curtains in the living-room, making the oil lamp flicker this must stop i will put a stop to this, and he tiptoed back into the kitchen, put wood in the stove and hearing the fox bark in the valley went again onto the porch, where standing on his toes he saw the sickly light of dawn, the paling stars, then to the west, the moon wallowing drunk through the swift clouds, the dark trees on the mountain-side. A cock crowed, and he opened the screen-door to be met physically by a *shriek* that rent the quiet night, rising and rising, (someone will come up the road! someone will call the state-police!), pausing for breath then rising again until silence choked it off in mid-utterance, and the voice, normal and human as even day after day he had heard it between the coffee and the toast, said, "What a cur-ious thing, what a cur-ious thing."

The mind, he said quietly under his breath, returns to the dust from which it sprang, and with the disappointment of inarticulateness, there returns the closed cycle of aspiration and yearning for self-knowledge. (Let me pray, sweet Jesus, let me pray.) This is the climax of the story, this is the climax.

Boldly he walked into the living-room, making his feet resound on the hollow flooring, hearing a mouse working in the hard plaster, feeling his

teeth on edge. "I'm all right, David," she said from the lighted room, "don't worry about me." "I'm not," he replied, embarrassed to have to answer. Why can't I feel anything; why don't I feel something? The doctor came out, and on the table by the little lamp he had lit, he drew into his syringe a mixture that lay in the shallow bowl of a spoon. *Look at me!* Bent over the lamp, his heavy sleepy face (*J'accuse!*) lay in shallow folds, as though melting *look at me damn you look at me, I can beat you at chess any day of the week.* From outside, the growing light poured (Sunday morning, the Sabbath day) through the misty windows into the room, and he rose from the sofa and placing both hands on the door-frame, stood there poised as though to run. He lifted himself on his toes, all his muscles taut for the nowcoming sound, and when it burst suddenly from out of the square paling lamplight, he rose higher on his toes, grasping the wood till his knuckles ached and opening his mouth, "I know she will not die," he said aloud, "I know she will not die!" He paused but the sound continued, mounting and swelling crescendo to a torrent of insane and beastly noise, frank and unrepressed and glorying in its tumultuous, echoing horror. Quickly he opened his mouth, crying over and over again, "Stop! stop! *stop!* STOP!" and then clapped his hand over his mouth as silence closed down on them all, and left them suspended, dangling, ridiculous . . . There was a hoarse male voice that said with sudden astonishment, "God Almighty!" and sweat rose on his flesh. There was a hoarse female voice, speaking in toneless desperation and saying, "God help me," and in the reverberating silence, in unison, two quiet voices speaking in the growing sickly light, "God help you and us, to deliver this child into the world, healthy and well, through Jesus Christ our Lord, amen . . ."

He rose from his knees (where is the cry?) and walked boldly to the bedroom door (where is the cry!). "All right, Mr. Blake," the doctor said, "you may come in now if you wish." Where is the cry! He saw his wife's pale face smiling at him from the tumbled bed, and intuitively he avoided looking at the small gray figure that lay at the foot of the bed, wrapped tentatively in an immaculate piece of white flannel. He knelt beside the bed and his eyes blurred, but he could not cry, he could not feel like crying. "It's all right," Helen said, "it's all right, darling. Do you care much, my darling, do you?" and he knew her face was wet too. "No," he said, "no, no . . ."

The kerosene lamp was still lit, and he put it out. The doctor and the

nurse were in the kitchen washing their hands, washing their instruments. "Too bad," the doctor said, "but these things happen. It was a fine baby. Too long coming." He took a piece of paper and rapidly sketched something on it, and as Blake looked at him he saw his mouth moving rapidly, but no sound came; his pencil indicated things on the design. Good Christ! do you think you can make it up to me by praising the kid? what the hell do I care about the kid? He said, "What am I to do?"

The doctor turned to glance at him, his face yellow and dead, melting. "That's your problem, Mr. Blake," he said. "My job is over." He was tired.

"I mean," he said, "what am I to do?" The doctor smiled. "It will have to be buried," he said, "the sooner the better. You can come with me to the town-clerk while I fill out the death-certificate, get his advice."

"Yes," he said. "You two must be dead. Would you like breakfast?"

"I could do with some eggs," the doctor said and the nurse smiled wanly.

He put on the pan, put butter in the pan, pleased to see the heavy meat drop neatly from the shell, turn white, feeling the cool new morning breeze from through the screen-door, blowing on his back. All through the night thousands slept while this was going on, thousands slept innocently the dead alone are lovable and I am a fool to even think they ought not have slept. *Man must abide . . .*

They ate their eggs with relish, and the doctor hastened to pack his bag; "Bad typhoid case other side of the mountain."

. . . his going hence, even as his coming hither: "I have no money for a coffin," Blake said.

"Haven't you got a box?"

"I couldn't—"

"A cardboard box?"

"Why, yes."

"Well, that will do."

He went into the shed and got the carton and lined it with newspaper and a clean blanket, then went into the living-room where, hearing his wife speaking in calm pleasant tones to Mrs. Pfeiffer he lifted the light form in the flannel and looked at it, his eyes dry, his heart light and measured in his breast, fighting a desire to say to himself, This is right; this is sweet and true. You are my son, he thought. He glanced around to see no one was looking, then hastily bent to kiss the yellow face that was so much like his own.

THE FIREPLACE

by

John Peale Bishop

IT was a functional fireplace, Anthony said, as he was showing the Burnhams the apartment. Or rather, what he said was, *"C'est une cheminée fonctionale!"* pursing his lips and making the last word too precise. Then he looked at the Burnhams with his sharp blue and almost sad, intelligent eyes. He had made his remark deliberately silly, as though to let you know that if he was a modern painter, he was also an American who had been to Yale and quite understood how ridiculous aesthetic patter could sound.

"You see," he went on. "A fireplace should function as a fire. Nothing else. There is no ornament. There is not even," he rubbed his hand over a severe plaster projection from the wall. "There is not even place for an ornament."

Over what was not a mantelpiece, but a ledge of plaster, less than an inch deep, he had hung one of his own paintings, so large that it seemed to Burnham rather disproportionate functioning there.

"Does it work?" Molly Burnham asked brightly.

"The painting?" Anthony again pursed his lips. "Nooo, it does not work. It's a machine, but it doesn't work. It only functions aesthetically." Again he let them in on the joke.

"I meant the fireplace," said Molly.

Anthony laughed. It was a small laugh. It made no sound, it was so intelligent. "Oh, yes, that *works*. Perfectly. It's done nothing else for about four centuries. It's an old house, you know, one of the few left from the time of François Premier. When I did the place over, I didn't touch the chimney. I simply removed the excess ornament."

"It's rather nice," said Burnham, afraid that his eyes had stayed too long on the painted machine, which whirled on its canvas with a centrifugal violence of ochre, vermilion, lamp black, Chinese white and Prussian blue.

"It's amusing!" put in Molly. She had been long enough in Paris to

know it was always safe to say anything was, if you were really bright about it, amusing.

"Oh, I ought to tell you. It doesn't stay. It goes with me to be in my New York show."

A drowsy servant padded in on black felt slippers with a tray of tea. Anthony poured.

"We'll take it, I think," said Burnham.

"Georgette," said Anthony, "goes with the apartment. I give her four hundred francs a month. You may have to give her a little more, since you'll only be here six months."

The Burnhams assented.

Anthony shouted, and Georgette drowsily reappeared in the doorway.

"Georgette, *Monsieur et Madame vont prendre l'appartement pour l'hiver. Ils vous payeront cinq cents francs par mois.* That's all right, isn't it? *Mais c'est pour l'hiver seulement. Compris?*"

"Oui, monsieur."

"Georgette," said Anthony, returning to his tenants, "sleeps out. You'll also have to pay her room. There is, unfortunately, not a servant's room in the house." He made it the occasion of another little laugh.

Georgette slept out. And sleep she did.

She rose, so she told the Burnhams at six, or a little after. Her husband, a mild little man, with cheeks stained with wine, and black crisp curls, always a little damp about his forehead, (they saw him sometimes in the kitchen after dinner) went to work at half-past six. Georgette gave him his coffee and bread before he started. At half-past eight she arrived at the Burnham's apartment. What she did in the meantime, they never knew. They suspected she went back to bed.

At ten she called them. When they came out, they found the breakfast laid on a low table before the fire in the living room. The cloth was white, the butter scraped into petals of pale yellow, a country color, and so fresh that it might have been brought that morning from the churn. The toast was an even brown, and hot to the fingers, the *café au lait* came steaming from green peasant pots. The Burnhams glowed; it was what a breakfast in France might be and never, in all their experience of French hotels, had been. They glowed with the fire.

It had been burning an hour or more and the logs were being consumed

in flame. There was no smoke, but only that bright quivering heat which burning wood alone can give.

"I see it functions," said Molly.

"This is fine," said Burnham. "But I wish you'd see if you can't persuade her to give us breakfast a little earlier. It's a quarter of eleven."

Georgette was not to be moved. As a cook she provided perfection, but she was to be persuaded neither to hurry nor economy. She knew how things should be done. If a new dish was suggested to her, she considered it drowsily. *"Oui, ça change un peu les idées,"* she would say. It came on the table, but in her own time. She spent hours brooding over an English cook book, which she could not read, but whose illustrations were a constant source of admiration. *"Voilà un plat bien presenté,"* she would say, sunk in a stupor of pleasure at the thought of mutton chops in paper petticoats or of a salmon alone in a sea of aspic and consoled by wave after wave of sea-green mayonnaise. *Voilà un plat bien présenté.* Nothing irritated her, least of all the ticking of the kitchen clock. The meals, it is true, were always prompt, that is to say, they came every day at the hour which Georgette had determined.

The only real argument was with breakfast. Burnham felt immoral sitting down at half past ten in his dressing gown before the burning fire. "It's all very well," he would say, "but really the morning's half gone before I had a look at it. Can't you do something?"

"No," said Molly, "I can't. I've talked myself until I am as green in the face as a *sauce verte.* But it does not the slightest bit of good. Breakfast is at ten-fifteen. You might as well get used to it. We rented the apartment from Anthony and we've got to keep his maid. She's the best cook we've ever had——"

"I know that."

"And we pay her five hundred francs a month. Twenty dollars."

"One hundred more than Anthony."

"He found her. What's more she's good-natured. And let me tell you that's a rare trait. Cooks are an irritable species. The better their omelettes, the more detestable their tempers. Georgette is placid. I've never seen her excited. She gets along with her husband, and he is her husband. That's something, after all, among the French. I've no objection to lovers as such, but they do seem to be upsetting."

"Well," said Burnham, "I'd like to upset Georgette just once. If I could see her in a hurry once, I'd leave this place satisfied."

That was the day before it happened. That night the Burnhams dined out and went on to a night-club. Then, after hours of dancing, they found, once in the taxi, they were ravenously hungry. Champagne rose lightly in their heads, but elsewhere they were empty. There was a choice, at that hour, of Montmartre or Montparnasse for four o'clock breakfast. They had danced in the Rue Fromentin, it seemed they must compensate by facing scrambled eggs and bacon somewhere near the Carrefour where the Boulevard Raspail crosses the Boulevard Montparnasse. They sat down at the Select.

The service was slow. "At that," said Burnham, "I think they'll beat Georgette."

"It's just a little after four," said Molly.

"It's half past," said Burnham.

"But," he found it possible to say, in another taxi, bound for bed, "if the coffee was stale and the milk condensed, for once I can say I've had my breakfast at a respectable hour. At a working man's hour."

Molly yawned. She was asleep before her husband came to the broad double bed.

She was soundly asleep when the cry came. It brought her to the point where she was aware of dreaming and the sound in her dream was remote. Then she sat up and struggling awake saw Georgette. She had a maniac's hair. *"Levez-vous, levez-vous, Madame!"* She gave Molly what turned out a cuff on the shoulders, then rushed with wild hands to the other side of the bed. *"Monsieur! Monsieur! O, O, O!"* She shook Burnham. He turned over. *"O, Madame,* waken Monsieur. The house is on fire."

Molly was awake. "What is it?"

Burnham moaned: "Tell me about it in the morning," and pulled the covers over his ears.

"Levez-vous, Monsieur!" Georgette screamed. "The house is on fire. Get up!" Then in a tone of anguished desperation. "Monsieur has gone back to sleep."

"I'll wake him," said Molly. "Telephone the fire department."

"O, Madame, the telephone does not function."

"Well, then, go get the firemen. Get the police. Get somebody."

"I'll go," said Georgette.

Burnham had opened a champagne-closed eye.

"What is it? What's Georgette so excited about?"

"It's a fire." Molly was already out of bed and gathering up her clothes.

Burnham was reaching for a cigarette. He lit it, deliberately blew out the match and waited for the first puff.

"Get up, get up, get up!" Molly's arms were bundled with silk and trailed stockings, she clutched a shoe in fingers, the other rode the pile she carried.

"Are the stairs gone?" Burnham smoked.

"Burn up, if you want to. But I'm not." She left Burnham. He roused himself from the bed and looked into the living room. Smoke poured from the functional chimney-piece and from the black cloud spat small spurts of flame. The floor was still there; it was not even hot to his bare feet.

"Molly," he shouted, "I'm dressing." Then he gave a look at the chimney, convulsively coughing from its smoky throat. He observed it carefully. *"Ça ne fonctionne plus,"* he said, and went back to the bedroom to get his clothes on.

"I'm not," he thought, "just the person a French fireman would pick out to rescue. I'd better be dressed and walk down the staircase."

Molly had got as far as stockings and chemise when she heard the mounting thud of the firemen's feet on the crooked, half-tiled stairs. She heard them come tramping. But she had forgotten her dressing-gown. She held what was left of her clothes as the first of the brass-helmeted heads taking the turn of the stairs rose on a level with her feet and stolidly came, step by step, up to her knees, up to her waist (which she bundling hid) up to her throat. He never got to her head. He was too short for that. But he strode past her, in blue uniform, belted and booted, with a pleased smirk that was meant for a smile. There were red tabs on his collar. His eyes took in everything.

"Bonjour, Madame."

"Bonjour, Madame." He, too, was polite but observant.

"Bonjour, Madame." The third was almost a boy, with flat blond face, and features cut out of his skin like the slits in pastry. He gaped in his pink skin as he went past.

"Bonjour, Madame."

All were short and chunky. All had a short, stout tread. All four of them looked sidewise under their brass helmets (three had black curls) and almost smiled as they went past.

Burnham saw them in the living room. He was dressed now. They tramped in and came to the door, bending a little as though they liked the

sound of their own boots. They looked around, all with the same appraising glance.

"On est très bien ici."

Then, as if they had all seen it at the same moment, three of them, started with a stride for the bakelite table at the farther side of the room. There was ink there, and all the materials of writing.

The first fireman tumbled into the chair, opened the pad, removed the paper, took out a form from his own portfolio and disposing himself with great care tried out a pen. He seemed to be in charge. The other two regarded his most minute movement with complete interest. He settled himself and with an air of a man about to enjoy himself, looked expectantly toward Burnham.

"Your name, Monsieur?"

Burnham told him.

"Born?"

Burnham gave the year, the month and the day of his birth.

"And where, Monsieur?"

Burnham spelled out his birthplace and the state in which the town was found.

"Look here," he said, "what about the fire? We have a fire, you know."

"That one there will occupy himself with the fire," said the fireman. "Your father's name, Monsieur?"

Burnham answering, looked at the blond boy. He knelt before the fire, undisconcerted by the smoke that enveloped him. He was occupied. But not with the fire. Instead, he seemed to be distracted by an instrument which he had drawn from his belt and which looked rather like a giant's hypodermic needle. He squirted it toward the fire. Nothing came out, but increasing volumes of black smoke.

The fireman who sat at the desk was more effective. He drew from Burnham more details on his ancestry than he himself thought he remembered. He had of him, not only his father's date of birth, but the place, and not only his father's, but his mother's. On either side, his two attendants waited each of Burnham's answers with the air of being ready to catch him up should he make an error and take away, at once, the privilege of having a fire.

The kneeling blond youth was having no success with the squirter. He tried it on the hearthstone, he tried it on Anthony's functional plaster. He

had no more success with them than he had with the smoke that still poured blackly forth.

"Profession, Monsieur?"

"Madman," said Burnham to himself, then gave the correct answer to the fireman.

They were still writing at the table. The two attendants, looking one over each shoulder, watched every curl of every letter with a look of profound and sincere admiration, then returned their upward glance suspiciously toward Burnham.

"He is very tired." The face of raspberry pastry with the blond locks rose from his knees and came over to the scribe. He showed him the squirter.

The scribe examined it seriously. He squirted the blotter, the table. Nothing came out. "Oui," he said, after a moment. "He is very tired. Oudin will give you his." Which Oudin rather reluctantly did. After all, his extinguisher was in order. There was no reason why it should be put out of commission simply because the Burnhams happened to have a fire.

"Now, Monsieur, your nationality?"

Burnham opened the window. A little of the dusky air drifted toward the morning.

"Américain," repeated the calligraphic fireman. "And now the number of your passport?"

"C'est bien," he pronounced. "All is in order." He closed his portfolio. "Now, we can see about the fire. It goes, Oudin?"

"Oui," said Oudin. *"Ça marche maintenant."*

"Permit me, Monsieur," the foreman of the firemen advanced to the open window and closed it. "That makes a current of air. It goes, Oudin?"

"Oui, oui," said the crouched Oudin, "it marches."

"You will see, Monsieur," the sergeant, or whatever he was, reassured Burnham. "It's very convenient for the extinguishing of the fire. You will see."

"What is it?" Burnham asked.

"The chimney's on fire."

"I thought so," said Burnham.

"There is too much soot up there."

He went out on the landing. Molly was there, dressed, but excited. "What do you mean by staying there. I was so worried."

"It's only a chimney fire."

"What were you doing that took so long?"

"It seems in France they only put out fires for people they know. It took us some time to get acquainted. Now," Burnham remarked wrily, "they know all about me."

"They knew all about me before they went in," said Molly. "If one of them missed anything, the others can tell him."

"Well, if you must go out on the landing with no clothes on."

"As for you, some day you'll just sleep through a fire."

"In which case, I'll be true to my name, I'll burn. I won't die from cold exposure."

Georgette was there. Her hair was straggling, she was dabbed with soot and her breath was hectic. But she was being coy with calamity.

"O, Monsieur, if you knew how I ran. All the way to the station." Then she said, "Monsieur knows he must give them something."

"For what?"

"O, for coming to the fire, Monsieur. It's customary."

"How much?"

"O, fifty francs. But Monsieur must be discreet. It's forbidden for them to take anything."

Customary and forbidden . . .

"That means folded," said Burnham.

Molly had been in to see the damage.

"It's mostly the smoke," she reported. The firemen came after her, and booted trooped past. Each touched his helmet, in time to their tread, and took in Molly with a glance that was meant to be sly. Burnham tapped the last one, the sergeant and scribe.

"I want to thank you."

"It's nothing, Monsieur," he said, but he followed Burnham through the door. His huge red hand was ready for Burnham's; and the fifty francs faded into it. "It's been a pleasure, Monsieur."

The three firemen were waiting for him on the stairs.

"To the pleasure," his salute had a smirk, "of seeing you again. And you Madame."

This was apparently a great joke in the fire department, for all the waiting firemen took it up, and heartily shouted, *"Au plaisir, au plaisir!"* "To the pleasure of seeing you again, Madame." They heard them still laughing below stairs.

"I hope you didn't give them anything," said Molly.

"Of course, I did," said Burnham. "They didn't souse anything?"

"No, but——"

"Madame ought to be very well satisfied," said Georgette. "The last fire I was in the concierge wouldn't let the firemen take the elevator, and the firemen wouldn't take the servants' stairs, so they stayed down below. And we ruined everything, throwing water on it. But everything! We were on the fifth floor. Madame ought not to complain. These firemen have been so nice."

"You see," said Burnham, "It's been a nice fire."

Georgette hesitated. "I'll have to give Monsieur and Madame breakfast in the dining room."

Burnham looked at his watch.

"What time is it?" Molly asked.

"Ten-fifteen. Right on the dot."

NIGGER SCHOOLHOUSE

by

T. R. Carskadon

'JAKE," seemed a funny name for such a little fellow. Black Becky came carrying him into our back yard, and she said to Mother, "He ain't been feelin' so well for the last couple of days, so I brung him along with me."

I can still see Jake, riding there with his head against his mother's big fat shoulder, and his little black arm around her neck. On his thumb he had one of those ruby rings that used to come wrapped around a penny stick of chewing gum. You could see he wasn't feeling well, and his black skin was sort of gray.

Black Becky put him down and said to Mother, "I hope you don't mind me bringin' him, Miss Ruth. I won't let him get in the way."

Mother told Becky that would be all right, and Becky took little Jake over and set him down on a box beside the grape arbor. Then she went into the house.

Black Becky came on Fridays to help get the house cleaned up for over Sunday. You could always tell when she was around by the smell of naphtha soap. We never liked naphtha much, because it took so long to get enough wrappers for a premium, and besides, the premiums they gave away with Octagon soap were much better anyway. But Becky wanted naphtha, and Mother always got it for her.

Becky used to scare us when we were real small, because she was so big and black. She always wound a white dust rag around her head when she was working. She had a heavy woolen skirt, and when she would go to scrub the back porch, she would pin up that skirt with safety pins and kneel down on her white petticoats. Her arms got all black and shiny when she put them in the scrub bucket, but the thing I could never understand was why the insides of her hands were so kind of pink, like the color had rubbed off.

Becky didn't mind us standing around watching her, but Mother didn't like to have us inside the house on Fridays and made us play outside if the

weather was all right. Johnnie and Bobbie Clark, next door, were playing with us, and my sister Julia had little M'rie Cook, from down the street, with her.

We were all trying to think of something to do when we heard the school bell ring. The school buildings were about three blocks away, and they were holding Teachers' Institute. They always held Institute just before school started in the fall, and that bell reminded us that vacation was over and we would all have to start back to school on Monday.

Julia put her fingers in her ears and pretended to groan like she was being hurt, and the rest of us did that too and we made such a racket that Mother had to come out and stop us.

Then Julia got an idea. "Let's go over to the nigger schoolhouse!" As soon as she said it, she looked around to see if Jake had heard us, but he was just sitting there on his box, looking at the kitchen door where Black Becky had gone into the house.

Johnnie Clark said, "Shame on you for sayin' nigger schoolhouse," but Julia and M'rie just giggled and Julia said it again. The girls were older than we were, and didn't pay much attention to us. Julia knew she was doing wrong, though, because that was one thing Grandma Allen was always correcting us about, and she always made us say "colored schoolhouse." She said black people had souls, just the same as other people, and we mustn't be hurting their feelings.

Sometimes Johnnie and Bobbie and I would act smart when we were with older boys, especially if we were over in Grandma Allen's yard, behind her big paling fence. Sometimes we'd holler,

"Nigger, nigger, never die,
Blackie nose and shiny eye,"

and then run as fast as we could. Usually the black boys were afraid to come over into Grandma Allen's yard to get us. But once Pete Shafer got fooled. That was in the winter time, and two little colored girls waited until everything was quiet and he couldn't see anyone, and then jumped on him when he came out of the gate. They got him down and slapped him hard and washed his face with a snowball before he could get away from them. We teased him about that for years.

The white school buildings, where the bell was ringing, were three

blocks away, but the nigger schoolhouse was right across the alley, in back of our house. Nobody ever knew why it was put there, for it was near the center of town, with white people living all around, and not a colored family within blocks and blocks of it. Most of the colored people lived out in the bottom, on Lincoln street, or down along the creek, on Water street.

M'rie Cook was telling us her father was a conductor on the railroad and he said over in Pennsylvania the niggers went to school right along with the white people. Julia said she didn't believe that because Uncle Ned once told her that down in Virginia they even had separate railroad cars for niggers, and they surely wouldn't let them *go to school* together in Pennsylvania. But M'rie said, "Well, ain't Pennsylvania different from Virginia, just like West Virginia is, and you don't know what they might have in Pennsylvania." Julia said, "I still don't believe you," and Johnnie and I told them to stop arguing and come on, if they were going.

All five of us kind of tiptoed out the back gate, because Mother never liked it very much when we played out in the alley. We walked down past the back of Mrs. McCoole's house, and the Stevens' house, and Mr. Rogers' house to the place where we thought we could get over the fence and into the nigger school yard. They had a high board fence, seven feet high, with barbed wire on the top of it, running along the alley to close in the back of the nigger school yard.

The only place we had a chance to get over the fence was right where it joined on to the coal house, in back of the school. You could get a hand hold on the corner boards of the coal house, and some boys had nailed a few blocks of wood on the outside of the fence to give you a toe hold. Also, a piece of the bottom board was broken off there, and that left a hole about the size of a rabbit that you might wriggle through on the ground.

Julia had to go first, of course, and with M'rie pushing her she finally made it on top of the coal house, but she caught her drawers on a piece of barbed wire and snagged them a little before she could get loose. She reached down and gave M'rie a hand hold and got her up, and the two of them managed to get Johnnie up, but Bobbie and I decided to wriggle through the hole on the ground and we made it, though I scraped my side a little bit doing it.

Julia and M'rie went over to the edge of the coal house roof and hung by their hands and then dropped. Johnnie didn't want to do it at first, but

they shamed him into it. He hit his chin on his knees when he dropped and it hurt him a little, but he didn't cry.

Once we all got inside the nigger school yard, we were a little scared. It was so empty and quiet in there, and the summer grass was high and thick, and it was like my Christmas book, "Lion Jack in the Jungle." M'rie said, "Dare you to look in the nigger schoolhouse!" and giggled, and Julia said she wouldn't take a dare, and started over, and the rest of us finally started over with her.

We wondered what kind of desks they had for the niggers, and how they could have all the grades in just one big room, and with a man for teacher, at that. It seemed funny to have a man teacher, even though he was a black man. We went over to the schoolhouse, a one-story brick building, and climbed up the rough part of the foundation to where we could get a hold on the window sill, and peeped in.

It seemed dark inside, after the glare of the sun outside, and at first all we could see were several rows of double desks, just like a regular schoolroom, with the high desks in back, and the low ones down front. Pretty soon we saw a colored man over in the corner. It was Jim Henry, who was one of the two janitors over at the white schools, and who was now getting the colored school ready to open on Monday. As soon as she saw him, M'rie squealed, "There's Jim Henry!" and we all jumped down from the window and ran over toward the coal house.

Jim Henry heard the commotion and came out of the schoolhouse. He knew all of us kids and knew our fathers and mothers, and he said, "Looka here, children, what you doin' in this yard?" We didn't answer him, but just tried to climb up the fence on to the coal house roof. Jim Henry said, "Here, here, that's no way to get out. Come on now, and I'll let you out the front gate. Come on!" We were so scared that he would tell Mother or something that we didn't say a word, but just walked over to the gate, and when he let us out we ran as fast as we could straight up Church street.

Since we came out the front gate we had to go up around the corner of the block to get to the alley and get back home the same way we came. We went in with elaborate slowness, so Mother wouldn't think anything had happened.

Black Becky had the green carpet out of the sitting-room up on a wire and was beating it with a carpet beater. Little Jake had a stick in his hands, and he would walk solemnly up to the carpet and hit it a whack and then

look up at Becky and laugh. When she moved around to the other side he couldn't see her and all he could see was some big thing poking out the carpet at him, and he was scared. Finally he figured it out, and when he got around to the other side and saw Becky, he ran up and grabbed her skirt and held on a long time before he raised his stick and hit that old carpet again.

Fortunately Mother hadn't seen us children either going out or coming in, so we stayed in the back yard a while, and then told Mother we were going over to Grandma Allen's to play. She said all right, and I think she was glad to get rid of us.

When my father came home for dinner at noon, he saw little Jake and asked Becky who that was. She said, "That's my youngest one, Mister Bob, but he ain't feelin' so peart today." My father laughed, and told Becky to feed him a good dinner, and maybe he would feel better. Julia and I hurried up our dinner so we could go out in the kitchen and watch Becky and Jake eat, but Mother made us go on outside.

That afternoon we set up a ringing stand game over at Grandma Allen's and played with it a couple of hours and then brought our little gang back to our back yard.

By that time little Jake was getting lonesome for some company and he came over and said to us, "Kin I play too?" Mother never let us play with colored children, and I don't suppose Jake had ever had much chance to play with white children, but it seemed all right to let him play with us there in our back yard.

We started to play hide and seek. We counted out engine, engine, number nine, running on Chicago line, and M'rie was the last one out and she had to be It. She hid her face against the big pear tree. While the rest of us were running out to find places to hide, little Jake, in his deliberate way, just walked around to the other side of the pear tree and stood there.

As soon as M'rie left to hunt, Jake reached around and said, "Free." M'rie said, "No fair! No fair hidin' behind base!" and raised such a fuss about it that she and Julia made us all go out and hide over again. This time Jake tried to hide behind a washtub over by the grape arbor, but his legs were sticking out and he was the first one caught.

We played hide and seek, which we called "hidey whoop," several times, and then we all made mud pies. Jake paid no special attention to us, but he was a little puzzled when Julia wouldn't let him use her little blue

shovel that she let the rest of us use to smooth off our pies. He didn't say anything, but went to work to smooth off his pie with his little black fist.

After we had made pies for a while, Julia said, "Let's play school." Jake came right along with the rest of us. Julia said she would be the teacher, and under the pear tree would be the schoolroom. She told us all to get pieces of boards for slates. Jake got one end of an old grape basket, which made a funny looking slate, but he didn't seem to know what it was for anyway.

Jake sat down between M'rie and Johnnie. Julia started to call the roll, and then she noticed Jake. She made him get up and go with her over by the ash pile. She picked up a stick and marked off a square on the ground, put a box in it for him to sit on, and told him he would have to stay there.

Jake didn't understand what that was for. I think Julia was giving him a real lesson, because Jake was too little to know what going to school was like. He must have thought that when he went to school he would go right along with the rest of us, and now Julia was showing him how it was. He had to stay over by the ash pile. That was the nigger schoolhouse.

Julia came back and called the roll and made us do some arithmetic and tried to give us a geography lesson, but we all got to laughing so, she had to stop it. Then she called for some memory gems, and she and M'rie were just showing off because they were in the fourth grade and knew some, and none of us boys did. They recited everything they knew and then tried to make up some to fool us, and marked us down for not knowing any, and we were getting tired of playing school.

Nobody was paying much attention to Jake. He was all alone over thereby the ash pile, sitting on his box and dodging and blinking to keep the sun out of his eyes. He looked like something was hurting him, and every once in a while he would wriggle just a little bit, like he was afraid to move. Pretty soon tears came in his eyes, but he just sat there, and wouldn't move.

It was biggity Julia who found out what the trouble was. She went over to Jake, and then let out a squeal and called out to M'rie, "How do you spell 'up' backwards?"

M'rie took her cue at once and yelled "PEE YEW," and started to hold her nose. Pretty soon they had all of us doing it, yelling "PEE YEW,"

and holding our noses and dancing around poor little Jake, who just sat there with tears running down his face.

Mother and Black Becky came hurrying out of the house to see what was the matter. As soon as Becky saw what the trouble was she pretended to be very angry, trying to impress Mother, and slapped Jake's face. Little Jake just looked up at her like his heart would break, because it was Black Becky who slapped him.

Mother said, "Becky, don't you dare touch him again. You know it's not the child's fault. It has happened to my children, just as it has happened to yours. Now get a tub of water and take him out to the wood house and change him. I'll give you an old pair of pants of Ted's to put on him."

Becky got a tub of water and some soap and a rag and put them in the wood house and then came back for Jake. When she went toward him, he pulled back like he was afraid of her. That was too much for Becky, and she grabbed him up and kissed him and chewed his ear. Jake smiled at her, with the tears still on his face, and he turned his little black head around so she could chew his other ear.

Jake wasn't afraid any more. For a while it seemed like he had been pushed out into a strange new world of white children, and unfamiliar games, and a schoolhouse over by the ash pile. But that world was gone now, and Jake knew it would never come again. He buried his nose in a familiar shoulder. Black Becky would take care of him.

GOING TO GET MARRIED

by

Stella Ryan

THEY were always looking for some place where they could be together without spending any money. That was because they wanted to get married, Stanley William Cullum to Anne Anita Ridge, and they were trying to save enough to get married on.

They thought three hundred and fifty would be enough. Four hundred seemed too much to wait for, and three hundred unless it was jacked up by fifty more seemed ready to collapse at the slightest touch and fall back alarmingly toward its lesser neighbor. On an evening in May they were still ninety-seven dollars distant from this heartening sum, but it was traveling toward them at the rate of nine dollars a week which was nothing to look at in the hand, just a five-dollar bill and four singles, but which left nothing less than an excavation in the twenty-two dollars of Stanley's pay envelope.

It was Thursday, the second week in May, and they were sitting together on a wooden settle facing a large painting in a gold frame that almost covered an entire wall in one of the little rooms of the Library at Forty-second street. This settle was one of the few pieces of furniture out of all the benches and chairs and seats and stools in the city where a man and a girl could be together for less than a dime's worth or a quarter's worth or a dollar's worth of something or other.

Almost all winter they had had the settle to themselves as only one or two people at a time were likely to wander in on fine nights to look at the paintings, and even on very cold or very wet nights when quite a few people came in and took a long time to examine everything in the room and even shared the settle with them, they never tried to elbow Stanley and Anita from their own special end.

Because it had been a chilly spring the winter heat was still turned on in the Library, but suddenly under a high south wind it was like summer in the streets and the little room was like an oven. Anita started to take off her

coat. She said, "It feels like summer." She said it happily because they were planning now to be married by the end of August.

Stanley said, "I suppose I might as well tell you."

"What?" She stopped taking off her coat but held on to it with both hands.

"I've been putting off telling you because I knew you'd get sore."

"No, tell me, Stan."

"Well, I've lost my job."

"But I thought everything was going good in this job?"

"So it was."

"Then what?"

He tried to explain. It had not happened all at once. It even went back a few years and had something to do with his army service in the Philippines. He had been an army man long enough to have squared-up shoulders, and he still brought his heels together when he stopped to talk to anyone. But he couldn't stand the Philippines. Too much heat. Besides, he had got good and sick of being ordered around. He'd got so sick of being at the wrong end of snappy orders he'd quit when his time was up and become a civilian again. But it was just as bad on the outside, and even in this last job he was at the wrong end of orders again. The boss's cousin. He'd stood all he could, but at last he'd told the cousin where he got off.

"But, Stan, you can't. Not when you work for people you can't. You ought to know that by this."

"I knew you'd get sore. That's why I put off telling you."

"When did you lose it?"

"When?"

"You've been putting off telling me. When did you lose it?"

"Oh, about a week ago."

"I can tell it's longer than a week."

"I'll get another. Don't I always get another?"

"You ought to tell me, Stan."

He looked ahead at the big painting in its gold frame. But he was not looking at it. Neither of them had ever had time to look at it. Yet by some process of optical osmosis its details had managed to seep into their minds, and now for quite a while from their end of the settle they had steadily on Thursday nights been keeping company with the five men who rowed a small

boat in the middle of the great gray mounds of water that almost closed out the sky where it stretched from frame's edge to frame's edge.

Anita said, "I think maybe you lost it a couple of weeks ago, or even a month."

"Christmas."

"Christmas? And now it's May!"

"Five months, pretty near."

"Stan, you had to break into your savings, maybe."

"That's a good guess."

"You don't mean you had to draw a lot?"

"Well, five months is a long time."

"But you didn't have to draw it all?"

He began looking through some papers in the inner pocket of his coat. He found the bank-book and handed it to her and she saw where a machine had bitten down through both pasteboard covers and made little holes that spelled cancelled.

"Why didn't you tell me, Stan?"

"Wanted to wait till I got another job. I didn't think it would be so long."

"But I can't bear it when you hold back a thing like that."

"What was the use of getting blue so far ahead? Anyhow, I thought I'd have another job by this."

"But jobs are hard to get. You've had four jobs, now, and each one has been harder to get."

"Go on. Rub it in."

"Sometimes I wonder why you don't go back to the army."

"I might try it again, if it wouldn't mean the Philippines."

She saw that the special policeman who was employed by the Library to watch the paintings in this room had come up closer to the settle and was looking at them. He was old and sad in his uniform and nice enough. He had never asked them to go even on rainy nights when the room was crowded. If it got too crowded he merely looked at them hard, and at the second or third look they had always obliged him by getting up and going.

But now he spoke, "Past closing time." Yet when they looked at him his mouth was snapped into a straight line, and they were not sure they had heard him. But they got up quickly and went out.

The air in the street was close and sticky, and suddenly as though it

were coming down on her out of the night, Anita felt the heavy weight of what had happened. In an instant it had settled on her and she had lost all hope that she and Stanley would ever be able to get married.

She said, "Stan, I want to go home now."

"Let's go and have a soda."

"You'd better save your money, and anyhow I want to go home."

"I knew it would be like this."

"You can't blame me if I don't exactly feel like laughing."

"Don't be mad. I'd have told you only I wanted to get a job first."

"I know, but I want to go home. I want to go home alone."

"Tomorrow's Friday night. How about it?"

"I don't know. I just want to go home."

"There's a swell movie at the Carlton. We can have one more big night anyhow."

"I don't know. Ring me up tomorrow at the place."

"Ah, look here, Anita. I'll get another job."

"I don't feel like talking any more about it."

"But you're not going to walk off like that?"

She held up her face and let him kiss her. Then he let her go.

She walked home, across town and up and across again. She was so weighted with her thoughts she never noticed whether she walked fast or slowly, and she would have gone on walking if suddenly the scarred stone steps of the flat, where she lived below Third avenue with her mother, her sister and her brother, had not set themselves down before her. It was a shock to see them for she had been standing still in her thoughts and it was as though the worn steps of the stoop had come hobbling to meet her.

She went up them and through the scuffed vestibule where the letter boxes gaped at her like a double row of broken teeth. She went up three flights of the dim stairway that curled up through the well of the house like a mammoth spiral in some enormous musty old shell.

She began to wonder how she would account to her mother for being home so early. She knew if she told that Stanley had lost his job again her mother would say she ought to give him up. Each time he lost his job her mother said it.

She put her key quickly into the door, opened it quickly and then almost with a jump she was across the hall and in her bedroom.

Her mother called, "Is that you, Sally?"

by Stella Ryan

Her mother was calling from the front room which had ceased to be a parlor and had become a bedroom years ago when her husband had died and she had been forced to rent it as a furnished room. It was rented now to a middle-aged lady who for years and years had been in charge of a rest room in one of the big department stores. Whenever she was out in the evening she allowed Anita's mother to go into the front room, turn on the radio and enjoy it in the dark which was necessary for the still greater enjoyment of sitting at the window and watching the street below.

Anita heard her mother coming down the hall to investigate and question, so she did not turn on the light in the little hall bedroom she shared with her sister Sally.

Her mother came peering in from the dim light of the hall, "My, it's you, Anita. You're early. What's the matter?"

"Headache."

"But you don't feel sick?"

"No, just a headache."

"Want me to wet a towel in hot water?"

"I'll be all right if I get in bed."

"But you ought to take something. Maybe I ought to go 'round the corner and get you something?"

"No, I'll be all right, but I don't want to talk."

"But I could go around the corner if you say so."

"No, Ma, and I just don't want to talk."

"Well, all right." Her mother closed the door and went away. Then she came back. "Anita, I just want to ask you something. I'm a little short this week, and I was wondering if you could let me have three dollars till Saturday."

"Here, take it out of my bag."

"I asked Teddy, but he was a little short, too, and I knew Sally wouldn't have anything."

"Just take my bag, Ma, and close the door."

"Well, call me if you want anything."

Her mother went away, but almost immediately she was back with her head stuck in the door. "Anita, there's only a two-dollar bill and a five in your bag."

The five-dollar bill represented the savings of over a month garnered in

quarters and dimes and only that very noon changed into a bill which was to have been given Stanley to put with the rest he had in the bank.

"There's only a two and a five, Anita."

"Take the five, then."

"I'll give it all back to you Saturday. And did I see you coming up the street alone, Anita? I thought it looked like you coming along, but I didn't see Stanley."

"Ma, I don't want to talk."

"Oh, I forgot. Well, call me if you need anything."

It was while she was standing there in the dark talking to her mother that Anita knew she was going to give Stanley up. The end of everything between them came and took her unawares as had the sudden looming up before her of the steps of the worn old stoop. She stood in the dark and knew how final the end was and how utterly beyond hope. Then after a while she got into bed and was heart-broken over and over before Sally came in from somewhere and she had to pretend to be asleep. She was heart-broken after that because while her mind knew bleakly and without hope that Stanley was to be given up, her heart was not able to know and only broke in trying.

The next morning she woke knowing she was going to give Stanley up. She knew as she ate her breakfast. She knew while she stitched linings into hats in the work-room of Lombard's wholesale millinery store. She even knew when Stanley telephoned her, even while she was agreeing to meet him that night. He did not know. He did not even seem to suspect. When she met him she would have to tell him.

But she went out as she always did Friday and spent her lunch hour in a beauty shop. There was still enough money in her pocketbook to have her hair pressed into close waves that clung to her skull like a cap of moulded putty, still enough to have her nails varnished into little disks of red sealing wax during the long scorching minutes while the waves were being baked into place, if she went without lunch. On Fridays she always went without lunch, so on this Friday, too, and was baked and enameled for the last time.

Their biggest Friday nights never started until after dinner so as usual that evening Anita went home to eat first. When her mother heard Anita letting herself in she peered from the kitchen to see who it was. She called, "Anita, do you want some veal stew or a pork chop? I got the veal stew for us and a pork chop for Teddy, but he's just phoned he's not coming home."

Anita said, "I'll take the pork chop." She went into the bedroom and put on her best dress, but she did not comb out her hair which now looked as though it had been painted on her head.

As soon as she went out to the dining room her mother hurried in from the kitchen with her dinner steaming-hot on a plate. She said, "I've got something to tell you. Teddy's going to give that girl a ring."

"Who? Blanche?"

"He's going to give her a ring. He told me just now when he called me up. It's for her birthday, a diamond engagement ring that he went and bought today out of what he's been saving. He's been saving ever since he got his first job."

"He's old enough to get married, Ma."

"Yes, but he oughtn't to have told it that way over the phone. That was a mean thing to spring it on me over the phone."

"Maybe he made up his mind in a hurry. He and Blanche have been going together for quite a while."

"Even so he could have brought it home and showed it to me."

"Maybe he knows you'd feel bad about it. Maybe he thought it would be easier that way."

"It was a mean thing. You'd think I hadn't been a good mother to him." She began to cry.

"Don't cry, Ma. He wouldn't do a thing like that to hurt you. He's a good kid."

"He could have brought it home to show me just the same."

After her mother stopped crying Anita went back to the bedroom and began to comb out her hair. She was thinking that she had made Stanley save his money when he had wanted to give her a ring. Then they had both felt close together, as though a bond had sprung up between them because she had refused the ring.

Sally came in. She worked a typewriter and a billing machine in the office of some coffee importers downtown, and her brightness and her quickness did not make up for the fact that where she ought to have had a dozen vertebrae in the center of her spine there was only something that felt like twelve steady inches of toothache. She often wondered if she were really paid well for all she did, overtime, and exchanging the wife's silk stockings, and buying theater and railway tickets for her in the noon hour, and telephoning

for her all over town trying to get a fourth for her at bridge, if the vertebrae would come back.

Sally slid for the bed and threw herself down with her arms stretched out and her small head still snug in its tight black hat tilted back towards the ceiling.

"Gee, my back!"

"Maybe if you took a bath, Sally."

"If that big stiff had given me another lick of work I'd have told him something. He waits till five o'clock to hand me the bills and then he stands over me and chews gum."

"Why don't you try a hot bath?"

Sally let her head pivot slowly until she could see Anita. "Your hair looks great. You're lucky to have Stanley. Any one's lucky who can grab off a man and step out of it all."

Their mother's voice called, "Dinner's ready, Sally."

She was too tired to answer, so Anita called for her, "All right, Ma." She had her hat on, now. She went close to the bed and looked down at Sally. "I'll get you an aspirin."

"No, all I want is to stay like this for days and days and days."

"Well, Sunday's coming. Why don't you and your girl friend go down to Long Beach and just lay around all day in the sun. Lots of people go down in May."

"I'll be broke. I have to buy shoes this week and maybe put something towards what I've been saving for my coat."

"Well, Ma owes me five dollars. If you can get it from her you can have it."

"Say, do you mean it?" Sally sat up.

"Sure I mean it. But now I've got to trot."

As she went into the hall her mother came toward her with a plate of pudding. "Here's this pudding. I was so upset about Teddy, I forgot I'd made a pudding."

"I can't. It'll spoil my lipstick."

"Well just taste it. It's tapioca a new way that I fixed with cream."

Anita thought her mother was going to cry again, so she ate the dish of pudding. But finally she was out and on her way downstairs and free to think about the things she was going to tell Stanley.

But what was the use of telling him things? What was the use of

trying to make him feel ashamed, of trying to change him when she was going to give him up?

What was the use of meeting him at all? When she reached the corner she had made up her mind not to meet him. She walked along at random in a direction opposite to the one she would have taken to meet him. The night was as warm as summer and the weight of her spring coat tired her. She came to a movie theater and went in.

It was the middle of the show. The voices from the screen were very loud, and the words came clipped at the edges as though they were a little too large for the machine that was pouring them out. She was so tired she could stop thinking of Stanley. She could stop thinking of anything, and she sat there as though she were under water and felt only the flow of the voices pouring over her.

After a while she became aware that the voices were quarreling. Two men were thundering at each other across a table in a small bare room. One of them jumped up and flung wide the door and framed in it was a strip of lonely beach and a rough windy sea. Gray water in a gold frame and five men in a boat bent double at the oars. A little boat and they were rowing hard in the middle of the sea. A wreck, maybe. Water all around and the waves coming at them. But they were still rowing. Their backs broke, like Sally's, but it wasn't in them to quit. They were holding out together and still rowing. They were dead, almost, but still rowing their oars. They weren't hoping any more, but they weren't giving up neither. There might be a ship. Oh, God, couldn't there be a ship!

People were swarming out into the aisles so she knew the show had come to an end. She got up and went out with them, and there was nothing to do then but to go home. She would have to tell her mother she was not going to marry Stanley.

When she got home her mother almost ran to the door to meet her. She said, "Well it's a good thing you're here! You had me worried sick."

"About what?"

"Stanley was here, and he was good and angry, and worried too, that you didn't meet him. If you were mad at him and didn't intend to meet him you should have told me. Where were you?"

"I went to the movies by myself."

"On account of being mad at Stanley?"

"I'm not going out with him any more. I'm going to give him up."

"You are?"

"He's been out of a job since Christmas and he never told me. He just went on pretending he had a job and drawing out all the money he had saved."

"You mean he drew out what you put in, too?"

"I'm not thinking about what I put in. That wasn't more than sixty dollars."

"Well, if I had known! I was feeling sorry for him, he looked so nice. He'd got himself all dressed up in a soldier's uniform to surprise you."

"A uniform?"

"Some soldier he knows happened to meet him on the street and Stanley made him go to his room and swap clothes because he wanted to show you how nice he looked in a uniform. And he did look nice, Anita, handsome even, and manly."

"Did you bring him in here in the dining room?" Teddy slept in the dining room on a day bed, and her mother was apt to make it up for the night as soon as the table had been cleared. "The bed wasn't made up, was it?"

"You needn't worry. The room looked real nice. But Stanley wouldn't have noticed anyhow because he was too upset, and besides he had been waiting for you a long time and it was late when he got here and he had to go back right away to take off the uniform so his friend could get back to his fort by a certain hour."

"I'm glad I didn't see him."

"He's going to call up later."

"I won't talk to him."

"I don't blame you. It was bad enough to use up all he had saved but to think he'd use your sixty dollars."

"I'm not worrying about that."

"Just the same it was your sixty dollars and he had no business to touch it."

"Yes, he had. Do you suppose I wouldn't have given it to him if he'd asked me? That's not why I'm giving him up. It's because he can't seem to hold a job."

"That's bad, too, but just the same what I can't get over is him taking your money."

"I'm sorry I told you, and you've got to stop talking about it, Ma, as

though he was a thief or something. He didn't take it. He just looked on it like borrowing."

"Just the same you can't let sixty dollars slip out of your hand so easy. Here's Teddy gone and given Blanche a ring, and that means he'll be getting married soon, and then there'll be only you and Sally to run things here in the house. Maybe then you'll be glad of sixty dollars."

"You oughtn't to have said that, Ma."

"Said what?"

"It's mean of you to be glad I'm not going to marry Stanley just because Teddy is going to get married."

"Who said such a thing? I never said it, but if you must know I was just sitting here thinking to myself how would Sally ever manage when you and Teddy was both gone, because she's not so strong, Sally ain't."

"You could rent another room, or something."

"Rooms is hard to rent, now, and I'm worried about the front room as it is, because after all the years she's been working in that store they've gone and taken a big slice out of her pay, and now maybe she'll be looking for some room that's cheaper."

"Well, I'll be still here, now."

"Then it won't be so bad. You and Sally will be able to manage together."

Anita burst into tears.

"But there's nothing to worry about, Anita, if you ain't going to marry Stanley."

"I'm not going to marry him." She was crying hard.

"It was just that I got a little worried when I thought of everything being left to Sally, on account of her back. I'm not so young any more and it ain't as if I could go out and get something to do myself."

The telephone rang.

Anita said, "If that's Stanley, I don't want to talk to him."

"What do you want me to say?"

"Don't say anything. Just that I won't speak to him." She ran past the ringing telephone into her bedroom and flung herself across the bed. She could not stop crying.

In a few seconds her mother came to the door. "Listen, Anita."

"I don't want to know what he said. Please go 'way, Ma. I don't want to know, and close the door."

Her mother went away, but Anita did not begin to undress until she heard Sally come in. Then she got into bed and gave another demonstration of pretending to be asleep.

The next morning she got up before anyone else and went out early without her breakfast in order to escape Stanley if he should try to see her before she went to work.

He was not downstairs waiting for her. It was so early the street had a wide gaping look, that special futility and sadness of desertion which empty packing cases, empty moving vans, empty theaters, restaurants and sea-side merry-go-rounds wear when they are out of use. She felt the sadness of the gaping street like an east wind against a cold in the chest, and wished she were an old woman with life all behind her instead of stretching out into emptiness and all ahead.

But it was a rush Saturday at Lombard's, the place where she worked, and she had so much to do she never once lifted her head from sewing red and blue quills jauntily on red and blue straw hats that were whipped out of her hand as she was breaking the thread from the last stitch and shot uptown in a taxi to be early enough to glitter before the eyes of the afternoon shoppers.

When the last hat of the last order was about to be snatched away, Anita suddenly wanted it for herself. She wanted to have its protection, to wear it as a shield in case, when she went out, Stanley should be down at the door waiting for her.

She spoke to Miss Grimes, forty years in the business, fifty years in wrinkles and sometimes sixty, in the back room when her feet would no longer hold her up and suddenly gave way three steps short of a chair.

"Certainly not."

"But, Miss Grimes, I'd pay for it just the same as though it was retail."

"It's ordered. It's got to go out."

She went straight to Mr. Lombard, anxious and dark behind his cigar smoke, anxious to keep his orders and his loans and his bills going around and around in the proper space and time like the three plates of a juggler.

"If it's ordered, so it must go out," Mr. Lombard said.

"Oh, let her," Mr. Jack Beck said. He was their designer, just back from Paris, just admitted into partnership, just engaged to a girl. "Who's the order for? Marks? I'll fix it up for you. I'll call him on the phone."

So a little after two o'clock Anita stepped into the street wearing the

new blue hat. When she saw Stanley waiting in his usual place between the brass fire-pump and the edge of the plate-glass window, the hat helped her walk toward him calmly, gathering in her mind all she had to say.

He said, "Hello." He began to search her with his eyes.

She coudn't bear his eyes. She said, "Hello." She said it down in the direction of his shoes. His shoes were shabby in spite of a high glossy shine. They broke her heart. She coudn't bear his shoes, either. But she began to walk away in step with them because it was such an old habit and seized on her before she realized that she was walking away in step.

He said, "How about lunch?" But he wasn't thinking about lunch.

"I'm saying goodbye, Stan."

"Well, let's get out of this crowd."

"No, I'm saying goodbye."

"I'm not."

"You act as though it was something we could make up."

"We've got to, or what's the use of anything. If we don't make up I don't even want to be alive."

"But it's nothing we can make up, Stan. It's not a quarrel."

"Then what is it?"

"It's you. What's the use of going on if you can't hold down a job?"

"But I'm wise to myself now, Anita. After this I'll hold down a job all right. I'll be in position to hold it down."

"Do you mean you're going back in the army?"

"No. I mean I'm going to get married. I mean we're going to get married. No matter how hard I try I can't think of myself not being married to you, and it's just not in the picture for me to be married to any other girl."

"I know."

"Then why don't we? We'd be married, and nothing would alter that. No matter what else happened it coudn't take that away from us."

"I'd be afraid, Stan. Not without a job."

"I'll get the job. If I was married I'd grab a job off quick."

"But you don't know, Teddy's going to get married and I couldn't walk out now on Ma and Sally."

"Well, let Teddy get married, but you'll be married first. Can't you see that the right thing for us to do is to get married? You don't need to be afraid. After we're married everything else will have to fit itself to that fact.

Why should we be always pushing aside the only thing that counts with us, and trying to fit our lives in some other way?"

"But even so, you haven't a job, and I'd be afraid."

"I'll get a job, and I'll keep it. Once I'm married I won't get so burned up over the things that happen on the job. It'll be different because nothing can eat me then. I'll have my wife and a couple kids, and then what'll be the big difference between me and the boss? Nothing but the size of a pay envelope."

"But you can't be sure, Stan."

"I'm sure. It'll be different when I've got my wife and some kids of my own. I'm so sure, that we're going down now to City Hall and get the license and get married."

"But how can I walk out on them home when Teddy's going to get married?"

"That'll come out all right. That'll straighten out like things always do. So come on. We'll think about that after we're married."

They walked over to take the subway down to City Hall.

Anita said, "It must have been fate, me wanting to wear a new blue hat."

"It was fate, all right, and luck, too. You'll see. From now on we'll get the breaks because we'll be pulling together."

"That's it, pulling together. Two on the oars instead of one. And I'll never let go, Stan, if you won't."

"I won't."

"You'll just keep pulling, won't you? No matter how hard it seems, and even if your back gets broke, you'll just keep pulling and never give up."

"Never. That's the word. Never. And it won't be hard. We'll be pulling together."

—*Continued from Page 2*

from Stanford University in 1922, he spent five years on the *San Francisco Chronicle,* and is now with the production department of the National Broadcasting Company. The author of numerous articles, chiefly in *The New Republic,* his "Nigger Schoolhouse" is his first published short story . . . Stella Ryan, who was born and raised in New York City, was for several years a public school teacher on the lower East Side, but for some time has been devoting all her time to writing. * * * With the change of STORY from a bi-monthly to a magazine appearing every month (on the 15th) STORY's staff has been enlarged by the addition of two persons who will be of interest to STORY readers: Bernardine Kielty, who will act in an assistant editorial capacity, has contributed her services to the magazine since shortly after its arrival on American soil from Majorca. Miss Kielty has written a number of short stories, one of which, "At Mama's," appeared in STORY No. 15, has acted as a reader for several New York publishing houses and has done a good deal of reviewing and editorial work . . . George Cronyn, who now has charge of the business administration of the magazine, was formerly with the *Atlantic Monthly,* and is an author in his own right. His latest book has just been bought by *Covici-Friede;* it is a biography of Peire Vidal, a troubadour of Provence in the time of the Third and Fourth Crusades, and entitled "The Fool of Venus." It will probably be announced for spring publication * * * Manuel Komroff, a frequent contributor, and a strong supporter of STORY, is represented on the fall book list with a new short novel, "I, the Tiger" (*Coward-McCann*), a satirical fantasy, in which American life and manners are viewed through the eyes of a caged animal. Hollywood is one of the main points

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of the sage Tiger's satire, the same Hollywood in which the author is now making a short sojourn. *Manuel, Manuel, burning bright!* * * * Several short story writers whose work is of an uncompromisingly high quality are out with books this season, notably Erskine Caldwell with "We Are the Living," twenty "brief stories" (*Viking*), a volume containing twenty tales—some of them rather tall ones. The stories range from the lyrical "Warm River" to the closing levity of "Country Full of Swedes." Caldwell has more than one string to his fiddle, and the volume is excellent reading, authoritative and versatile, whether the stories tend to youth and love or verge on the burlesque . . . H. E. Bates, whose books of short stories are considered classics in England but who has never, he laments, been able to get a magazine in America to print a single tale of his (the first American number of STORY broke this seeming curse) is represented on the *Robert O. Ballou* list with "The Black Boxer," eleven short stories. Of Bates, Horace Gregory in the *Herald Tribune Books* writes: "He belongs to a small company of younger English writers, poets as well as novelists, who are participating in a genuine literary revival." . . . Mr. Bates' little story "Time" (STORY No. 12) has been picked up by Edward J. O'Brien for inclusion in "The Best British Stories of 1933." . . . George Milburn is another short story writer who is out with a volume of his short pieces. Milburn, a native of Oklahoma, is as forthright an American humorist as the country can claim. He is a good deal more, too. In "No More Trumpets" (*Harcourt, Brace*) there are at least two stories, first printed by Mencken and Angoff in the *American Mercury*, "Revenge" and "Heel, Toe and a 1, 2, 3, 4," which are as fine as any written in the last ten years. With William Faulkner's "That

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Evening Sun Go Down" they can take their place on any short story collector's shelf and stand up just as well several years from now as they do today . . . Another interesting volume, the style of which tends toward a prose lyricism, is that of José Garcia Villa, "Footnote to Youth," *Scribner's*. There is a foreword by Edward J. O'Brien * * * An announcement of extreme interest to writers for STORY, especially those who are musically minded, comes to us from George Antheil, the young American composer whose modern opera "Trans-Atlantic" was performed the year before last in Frankfort, Germany. Mr. Antheil, who has just returned to this country, brings word that the modern opera movement in Germany has been practically killed there by the Hitler regime and that any renaissance in opera form must now come from America. Not only that, but an opera revival must "start with the writers." He therefore makes an appeal to STORY contributors (as representing the young and vitally artistic and emotional values in America) to turn their attention to libretti. Scripts for America operas, full length and one act, as well as scripts for ballets, are wanted. Mr. Antheil feels that the general musical public of America does not understand the new style of music readily without the aid of the eye . . . "We must have new libretti from the young American writers if America is to make the same progress that the music of all the other countries has made," he says. "American music is in sympathy with American writing. And unless there are some young writers with ideas and the simple power of putting them across in the musical theatre, with clean and simple, terrifying directness, there will be no musical theatre in the United States of America." We quote further from Mr. Antheil's communication to the editors: "Opera ideas should be

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musical . . . They should always be some story or emotion or character that needs music. Superimposed music upon a theatre piece which already works almost too well, merely clogs the action. Be as simple, as direct, and unpretentious as you are in STORY. And you must write as finely. Take chances with new ideas, new theatrical technics, new principles for humanity, new emotions—*new opera that never was before*. But avoid the old opera-styles unless you can (and you probably can't) write a new *Boris Goudonoff* in an American background. Write, if you can, about the America we know, or should remember. If you do it as well as you have done it in STORY, then we should really be able to interest the youngest composers automatically. They are not writing operas because no one has touched them. Your ideas are not in front of them. They do not receive your manuscripts in black and white, to ponder upon. *When they do, something will happen.*" Needless to say the editors of STORY feel warmly in sympathy with the idea and will be only too happy to cooperate. Money and musical talent for such productions, it is understood, are available—the only thing lacking is suitable libretto material. Any communications will be forwarded to Mr. Antheil. * * * Kay Boyle and Laurence Vail have left their Riviera place at *Villefranche* and have gone to live in Vienna. Last heard from they were looking for a reasonable *pension*. Alas! If there only were one! * * * In connection with the production of "Ah, Wilderness!" by the Theater Guild this fall, it is interesting to note that Eugene O'Neill was once a short story writer himself. He wrote "The Hairy Ape" in the form of a short story and, he tells us, it was rejected by almost every magazine in the United States. In despair (shall we say?) he then re-cast it in the form of a play.

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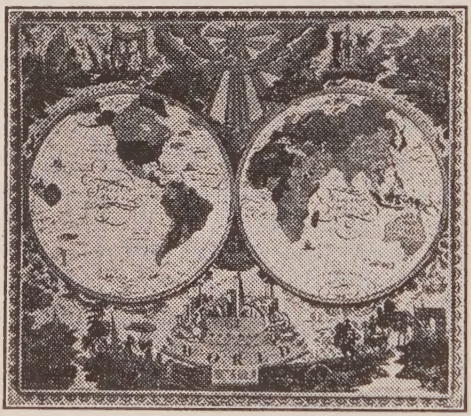

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